

263 hospitalised in Bahrain as temperatures soar

MANAMA (AFP) — A record 263 people have been hospitalised in Bahrain this summer after temperatures reached highs of 50 degrees Celsius, the health ministry said Sunday. Most of those hospitalised were building labourers and others working outside, a ministry spokesman said, quoted by the official GNA news agency. A week ago, 56 people collapsed from the heat in a single day as the country experienced its hottest June and July since records began in 1902. The average mean daily temperature in July, worked out on the basis of lowest and highest temperatures for each day, was 34.8 degrees Celsius.

Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأي

U.K., U.S. to announce new stand on Lockerbie

LONDON (AFP) — Britain and the United States are to announce within days that they are willing to agree to a trial of the Libyans accused of the 1988 Lockerbie jetliner bombing in a neutral country, it was reported Sunday. The Mail on Sunday said that a secret delegation from the Arab League was meeting Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in Tripoli this week-end to seek his agreement for the proposal to try the two suspects in The Hague. If all sides agree, the trial of the two agents would take place as early as next year in the Netherlands, under Scottish law and heard by Scottish judges, the British weekly newspaper said. Last month the two countries said they were prepared to examine the option of trying the two Libyans in a neutral country under Scottish law.

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King empowers Regent to change government



By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has delegated to HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, the power to form a new government and appoint new ministers, officials said on Sunday. A Royal Decree issued on August 12 and published in the Official Gazette yesterday empowers the Regent to accept or demand the resignations of ministers and the prime minister. According to the Royal Decree, a copy of which was made available to the Jordan Times, the only powers that remain outside the scope of the Regent's authority are entering into treaties and amending the Constitution. "The Royal Decree was aimed at giving the Regent adequate authority to run the country during the King's absence," one official said. But sources yesterday were divided on whether the King's unprecedented move signalled that a government change or reshuffle would be imminent or should rather be interpreted as a measure to ensure that state affairs are not slowed down while the King is

undergoing chemotherapy in the U.S. Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh said in answer to a question by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that "the Royal Decree came due to the fact that His Majesty could remain outside the country for some time before he completes his chemotherapy treatment in the U.S."

The King, hospitalised at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, since July 14, started a second cycle of chemotherapy on Wednesday. Physicians prescribed him six cycles of intravenous chemotherapy, each lasting four days with a break of three weeks in between, for a B-cell lymphoma believed to be completely curable.

Petra yesterday quoted Tarawneh as saying that "King Hussein enjoys good health, and the treatment is proceeding as planned."

Tarawneh said the recent resignation of former Water Minister Munther Haddadin over the current water crisis prompted the issuance of the decree in order to facilitate procedures in case the King was compelled to extend his stay abroad due to the lengthy period of time he might need to undergo treatment.

Tarawneh said the decree accepting Haddadin's resignation needed the King's signature and had to be sent to Washington, where the King signed it at the Jordanian embassy.

The water crisis came to a head on Aug. 9, when Haddadin resigned amidst increasing calls by deputies and a fierce media campaign. His portfolio was entrusted to Energy Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani.

But while officials described the recent Royal Decree as a mere precautionary measure, some observers said it could herald a reshuffle or a change of government.

The present cabinet of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has been under intense fire for the past six weeks for its handling of the contaminated water crisis.

Some said the Royal Decree could signify that the King is extending his



stay in the U.S., others said it proved that change could not wait any longer. A third group said the two theses do not exclude each other.

"The fact that His Majesty delegated to the Regent the power to appoint and dismiss the government could mean that change is imminent," conceded former Information Minister Ibrahim Izzeddin.

"After the water disaster, we need an efficient government, a government of real transparency and in tune with our times," said another seasoned observer, asking not to be named.

"We need a government that reflects the realities of the end of the 20th century, especially regarding freedoms and human rights."

In an open letter to the Regent last week, the King expressed dissatisfaction with the way the government was running the country and unveiled previously unreported cases of negligence, including a near collision of two Jumbo Jets in Jordanian airspace and a near explosion at the Aqaba power plant a few months ago, both of

(Continued on page 7)

Majali declares Zai water fit for human consumption

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali reassured citizens on Sunday that domestic water supplies flowing from the Zai Water Treatment Plant (ZWP) were safe and fit for human consumption after a six-week water pollution scare.

Majali said most local newspapers had exaggerated the water crisis. He said intermittent tap water supplies would return to normal after maintenance work at the ZWP, supplying 40 per cent of Amman's water needs, is completed.

"I assure citizens that everything is under control and every single drop of water leaving ZWP is drinkable," he said after meeting foreign water experts at the plant near Amman.

He said the ZWP was closed temporarily at dawn on Saturday after staff noticed increased levels of organic substances, chiefly algae. It resumed operations late on Saturday, he added. Most residents in Western

Amman continued to complain of scant summer water supplies. Others said water has been cut to their households for over five-weeks.

In a separate statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Health Minister Ashraf Kurdi also stressed the quality of domestic water supplies was in line with standards set by the World Health Organisation

registered during the same period last year.

Meanwhile, a Lower House deputy said after visiting ZWP that the water contamination crisis will only end if supplies from Israel's Lake Tiberias stop.

Salameh Hani, head of the House Committee on Water and Agriculture, told the Jordan Times on Sunday that the ZWP was not

Jordan Times after visiting the station that has remained off-limits to journalists since the water crisis flared.

"If this plan does not work, water coming from Lake Tiberias should be stopped, and Yarmouk River as well as Mukheibeh wells should be used instead."

Raw water delivered to the ZWP comes from KAC at Deir Alla in the Jordan River Valley.

Among KAC's potential water sources are the Yarmouk River which forms the border between Jordan and Syria and provides 135 million cubic metres per year and groundwater from the Mukheibeh wells which yield 18 mcm per year.

"Thanks to the water policy makers, we don't have a choice regarding Lake Tiberias. We either stop using it altogether or we use it with its contamination."

Under the Jordan-Israel peace treaty signed in 1994, Israel began channelling 60 million cubic metre per year (mcm/yr) from Lake Tiberias to the Kingdom in 1997.

Kurdi: Boil it a few minutes before drinking

(WHO).

"If there is any doubt that the water is drinkable, the ministry would have stopped pumping it," Petra quoted the minister as saying. "This is what the WHO has confirmed."

However, he repeated past advice that citizens should boil water for a few minutes before they drink it.

Kurdi stressed that the number of diarrhoea cases, according to Health Ministry figures, in the past two months was similar to rates

equipped to handle the large amounts of algae and organic substances found in surface water coming from the lake.

As a result, he added, ZWP technicians had to reduce the inflow of Lake Tiberias from 2,600 litres per second to 1,200 and mix it with water coming from King Abdullah Canal (KAC) to create a balanced and treatable mixture.

"This explains why many people in Amman do not receive water," Hani told the

Libya demands probe into 'MI6 plot to kill Qadhafi'

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya demanded Sunday that Britain open an inquiry into allegations by former British spy David Shayler that Britain's foreign intelligence agency, MI6, tried to assassinate Muammar Qadhafi.

"Opening an inquest would prove London's good intentions to disprove the involvement of its intelligence services in this plot," the Libyan foreign ministry said in a statement. Libya "reserves the right to self-defence and judicial action against the British government," the statement added.

It also said that the blocking this month of a BBC television special in which Shayler was to support revelations published by the New York Times and the Guardian "confirms the theories of the agent and the involvement of the British services in this terrorist act."

Shayler, a former counter-espionage officer with Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, has accused its sister service of having placed a bomb under the wrong car in Qadhafi's convoy in February 1996, killing several bystanders in the explosion.

He also said that the agent in charge of the assassination attempt was alleged to have ties with a right-wing group in Libya and was paid \$160,000.

Shayler, 32, was arrested in Paris early this month on an extradition warrant pending prosecution in Britain under a law protecting official secrets.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has called Shayler's allegations "pure inventions" motivated by personal reasons.

Iran voices support for peace and distrust in Israel

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said Sunday that he supported peace in the Middle East but believed there was no way that Israel would settle for a "just" peace.

"Jordan has shouldered the outcome of the 1967 war. We are for peace and tranquillity in the region, but peace will only come when everyone will be given their rights," President Khatami said in talks with Speaker of Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Srour, who is on a visit here.

He added that Iran recognises Jordan's hard conditions and the burdens it shouldered.

"Of course, there is no hope that Israel will opt for a just peace and reconciliation," President Khatami added. "Fundamentally, Israel's existence is based on terror and usurpation and it cannot settle for a just peace."

"As long as millions of Palestinians are removed from their homes and the usurper does not allow them to return, there will be no real peace in the Middle East," he said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

President Khatami stressed the importance of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Iran last year. "Prince Hassan's participation in the meetings of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) was active, effective and distinguished," said President Khatami, adding that "it paved proper grounds

for friendship and cooperation" between Iran and Jordan, which the Islamic republic shunned for nearly two decades because of its moderate stand on the Jewish state and support of Iraq during its 1980-88 war against Iran.

"We can boost cooperation in all fields," he said. President Khatami also inquired about King Hussein's health and wished him speedy recovery and safe return home.

Srour, who arrived Saturday to discuss parliamentary cooperation with Iran, conveyed King Hussein's and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's greetings to President Khatami.

Srour said that Jordan was "ready to strengthen ties."

He also held talks with former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani and reviewed with him issues of common concern.

In addition he held talks with Deputy President Yusef Habibi and discussed with him scopes of cooperation between Jordan and Iran.

"The parliament is after a qualitative improvement in relations with the Islamic republic. We always try to stop anything that could harm relations between the two countries," he said.

The MP's visit comes a week after that of Foreign Minister Jawad Anani as the two countries continue stepping up improvements in their relations.

Regent says ensuring citizens' security is state priority

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday said that ensuring security for Jordanian citizens lies at the top of the state's list of priorities.

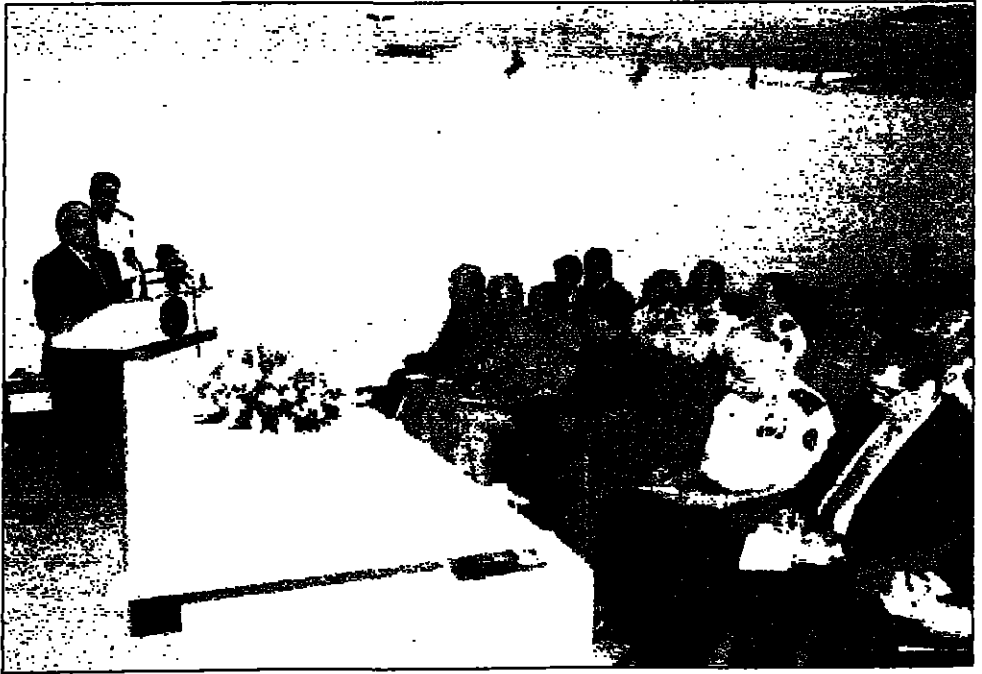
Speaking during a visit to the Public Security Department (PSD), where he met its Director Lieutenant General Nasouh Muhieddin and senior assistants, Prince Hassan said that His Majesty King Hussein, the supreme commander of the armed forces, is keen on providing the PSD with the best facilities and equipment and the highest level of training so that it can pursue its duties of safeguarding the country's security and stability and combating crime.

Prince Hassan noted that in the preparation of the country's fiscal budget, priorities for spending should be openly discussed in a dialogue that must be clear and transparent, in which all concerned parties should participate.

He voiced appreciation of the PSD's efforts to combat crime and drugs and to safeguard stability and security in Jordan, stressing the importance of coordination among the concerned departments for achieving the common goal.

Prince Hassan said that the state is determined to combat crime by eliminating its causes and ensuring social security, noting that the government-sponsored social safety package aims at combating poverty and unemployment and boosting production.

He called on the public to



His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh and head of PSD Nasouh Muhieddin listen to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday, on security related issues during a visit to the Public Security Department headquarters (Photo by Boghos)

view the PSD's efforts, duties and achievements in combating crime and protecting stability through a broader perspective which combines protection of security on the one hand and economic growth and social stability on the other.

Prince Hassan pointed out that security and stability ensure and enhance tourism industry in Jordan and emphasised that combating drugs is an effort aimed not only at aborting drug-trafficking but also ensuring protection for the society from the dangers in Jordan as well as other neighbouring Arab countries.

Calling on the various sectors to establish social and economic security, Prince Hassan said: "Cooperation is needed as we are all partners in shouldering responsibility and no one can boast to be perfect."

Prince Hassan reaffirmed the need for implementing duties and guaranteeing transparency and clarity for the sake of applying the principle of punishment and reward which King Hussein has recently emphasised.

Prince Hassan listened to a briefing by the PSD director about the department's achievements and preparations to cope with the growing

challenges and developments in protecting society.

He also listened to a briefing by the PSD's director of planning on the development of the department's different sections over the past few years.

Attending the meeting were the commander of special operations, His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh, King Hussein's Advisor on Military Affairs Hmeidi Fayez and the directors of the civil defence and general intelligence departments.

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Algerian rebel leader killed — paper

ALGIERS (R) — Troops have killed a commander of Algeria's most radical guerrilla faction whom the authorities blame for the massacres of thousands of civilians, a local daily said on Sunday.

Liberte newspaper said

Bekati Rabah was gunned

down on Friday at home

while he was paying a

stealthy visit to his family

in Remchi area in Tlemcen province, 440 km west of Algiers.

Rabah, known by his nom de guerre Abdelkader, was a commander of al Aghual (Terror) phalanx, an elite unit within the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Algeria's most feared guerrilla faction, it said.

The newspaper's report could not be immediately

confirmed by official or independent sources.

The authorities blame the GIA for slaughtering thousands of civilians in the past two years, including 16 villagers who have their throats slashed in two rebel attacks last Thursday night.

The reported killing of Rabah followed the slaying of another GIA commander Hamou El Eulmi last week

in the eastern city of Constantine.

Eulmi was the GIA chief in the provinces of Constantine, Skikda and Guelma. He was sentenced to death in absentia for murdering many civilians, including cutting the throats of a father and son in front of other members of the family, in eastern Algeria.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Journalist found dead in Lebanon

BAALBECK (AP) — A Lebanese journalist was found dead Sunday with a gunshot wound to his head, police said. Hassan Hamieh, 35, worked as a reporter for the opposition Al Diyar newspaper in Baalbeck, in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. He was discovered dead in his car by passers-by on a road near Taraiya, a village 18 kilometres west of Baalbeck. A coroner who examined Hamieh's body said he was shot from a short distance, suggesting that he might have committed suicide. But the physician said he could not rule out a murder.

Al Azhar sheikh condemns bombings

CAIRO (AFP) — Sheikh Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, the imam of Al Azhar, the highest Sunni Muslim authority, on Sunday denounced nations harbouring criminals such as those who bombed U.S. embassies in Africa last week. Tantawi said those attacks were the result of nations, which he did not name, harbouring Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists, adding that aiding those elements was "a gross error." "Blowing up embassies — whether they belong to the U.S., European countries, African, Asian or even Australia — and killing women and children is a criminal act," he told government newspaper Rose Al Youssef. The attacks "could only have been carried out by vile people, cowards and traitors, because a courageous and reasonable man would never dare commit them," he said.

Egyptian policeman gunned down

MINYA (AFP) — A policeman in Upper Egypt was killed Sunday by unknown gunmen thought to be Islamists, police said. Abdul Aal Ahmad Abdul Rahman, 23, was gunned down near dawn in Abu Qirgas, 280 kilometres south of Cairo. The attackers, who got away, are thought to be members of the armed Islamists group Gamaa Islamiyya, the official said. Rahman's killing was the fourth in Minya province since the beginning of the month.

'Prisoners die from lack of medical care'

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian human rights group said Sunday that 13 prisoners have died in Egyptian prisons over the last 10 weeks due to lack of medical care. "Thirteen common law prisoners and political detainees died since the end of May in five Egyptian prisons... due to the inadequacy or absence of needed medical care," the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights said in a report. The group said it had sent 32 letters to the authorities since the end of May about the situation but received just one response from Health Minister Ismail Sallam saying he would seek to improve conditions. "This reinforces suspicions... that the denial of the 13 prisoners' right to medical care was premeditated," the report said. It also said that tuberculosis was widespread due to overcrowding of cells, lack of proper ventilation and contaminated drinking water.

Yatom ventures into arms business

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The former head of Mossad, who quit in April in the midst of a string of bungles by the Israeli secret service, has set himself up as a business consultant and applied for a weapons export licence. "People with ill will want to portray me as an arms dealer," Danny Yatom told the Mazar newspaper on Sunday, adding that his company plans to launch "major business projects abroad in oil, gas and agriculture." An Israeli television network reported that Yatom's firm met last month with an official of the Kazakhstani arms ministry during a visit to the Israeli armaments ministry. "My critics would maybe be happier if I opened a chain of restaurants or supermarkets, but one has to make a living. I am an outstanding man, scrupulously respectful of the law," he said. Yatom stepped down as head of the Mossad in April after a failed assassination attempt on an Islamist leader in Jordan, one of several embarrassing setbacks involving the spy agency.

Turkish prosecutor opens investigation of Islamist party

ANKARA (AP) — In a new challenge to Turkey's Islamic movement, a prosecutor has started scrutinising speeches and actions of an Islamic-oriented party to assess whether it is a continuation of one banned for its anti-secular stance, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Ankara state security prosecutor Nuh Mete Yuksek could ask the Supreme Court to shut down the Virtue Party if he concludes it shares the alleged anti-secular views of the Welfare Party, the Yeni Yuzul daily said.

Turkey has an overwhelmingly Islamic population but a constitutionally protected secular government.

Welfare was the largest party in Parliament until a court ordered the party disbanded earlier this year, saying it had sought to undermine the secular system. Five of its deputies, including former Premier

Necmettin Erbakan, were banned from holding political office for five years. Under the constitution, a banned party cannot be reborn under a different name.

Although Virtue is made up of former Welfare deputies, the party has been following a more moderate line under its leader, Recai Kutan. It has taken pains not to anger the pro-secular establishment, led by the military.

Critics claim that Erbakan, who has led the Islamic movement for the last two decades, is running Virtue behind the scenes. Turkey's generals pressured Erbakan's government into resigning last year after it sought to introduce a number of policies aimed at increasing the influence of Islam.

Virtue is considered a front-runner in national parliamentary elections set for April. There was no indication when the prosecutor would decide.

Iranian moderates back convicted Tehran mayor

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's moderate government has renewed its support for the suspended mayor of Tehran, refusing to nominate a successor until the appeals process is exhausted.

"No one has been nominated for the mayorship of Greater Tehran, and we will await the court ruling," the Hamshahri daily quoted Interior Minister Abdul Vahed Mousavi Lari as saying at a gathering in Tabriz on Saturday night.

Analysts said this was a clear sign of continued support for Tehran's suspended mayor, Gholam Hussein Karbaschi, by the cabinet of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

Earlier, Khatami said he hoped his government could continue to take advantage of Karbaschi's services and abilities.

Karbaschi, a powerful supporter of the president, was sentenced on graft charges in July to five years in prison, a long-term ban from public office, and a hefty fine. He was also sentenced to 60 lashes,

suspended for two years. He is appealing the conviction.

Asked about Karbaschi's position as secretary general of the Kargozaran Al Sazandegi (Executives of Construction) party, the interior minister said: "Under the Law for Parties, [such] convictions lead solely to a ban from government activities, and nothing else."

Karbaschi has said his party would take an active role in the upcoming elections for the Assembly of Experts, which has the power to appoint and dismiss Iran's supreme leader.

In what analysts see as a veiled message to the conservatives who control the judiciary, Khatami last week met Karbaschi and founding members of the Kargozaran.

The liberal Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Ayatollah Mohajerani, Central Bank Governor Mohsen Nourbakhsh and two vice-presidents are members of the grouping.

The party — and Karbaschi in particular — angered Iran's



Hundreds of hungry Sudanese sweep food off an airstrip Sunday after an airdrop by the World Food Programme in the village of Acumcum, which is in the Bahr Al Ghazal province of southern Sudan. The province has been hit by a devastating famine in recent months, but aid agencies continue to deliver food despite heavy rains and poor infrastructure (AFP photo)

European countries favour splitting off southern Sudan — opposition leader

CAIRO (AFP) — A Sudanese opposition leader has accused certain European countries of wanting to separate southern Sudan from the north in order to end the country's 15-year civil war.

"Some European countries... think the war must be stopped even if that is to be accomplished by separating the south," which is Christian and animist, from the Muslim north, Sadeq Al

Mahdi, leader of the northern opposition told Egyptian economic newspaper Al Aalam Al Youm.

He did not identify the countries, but said that they "believe it is possible to get the Islamist regime [in Khartoum] to agree to reforms."

Mahdi, a former Sudanese prime minister ousted in a coup in 1989, was in Cairo for a two-day meeting of the Sudanese opposition coal-

ition, the National Democratic Alliance, which began Saturday.

Civil war has been raging in southern Sudan since 1983. Mahdi, leader of the Umma Party, said while the European countries were leaning toward Sudanese separatism, the southern rebels' Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) "is placing more emphasis on Sudan's unity

after noting the disadvantages of a possible separation."

At the same time, the Islamist government which came to power in 1989 "is becoming more separatist because it has realised it can't impose its power on all of Sudan," he added.

The Sudanese government agreed in principle this year to grant self-determination to southern Sudan but it differs with the SPLA over the size of the south.

'Turkey loses \$33 billion of trade because of Iraq embargo'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Turkey has lost out on \$33 billion of trade with Iraq, a previously important trading partner, because of the U.N. embargo, Turkey's charge d'affaires in Baghdad said.

In an interview with Iraqi weekly Al Mussawer Al

Arabi, Salim Othman Oglo also said there was an "insufficiency" in the number of contracts that Iraq has signed with Turkey as part of the U.N. oil-for-food programme.

The diplomat said \$228 million of contracts had been signed in the first three

phases of the programme. The oil-for-food programme allows Baghdad to export \$5.2 billion of oil every six months in return for basic products for its population, struggling after eight years of sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

New northern Kuwaiti city would cost \$5.85 billion — newspaper

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A proposed new city in the north of Kuwait will cost an estimated 1.8 billion dinars (\$5.85 billion), a local newspaper quoted an official report as saying Sunday.

A report prepared by the government's New Cities Committee on the proposed new city of Subiyah, some 130 kilometres north of Kuwait City, estimates the three phases of construction will take 20 years, Al Qabas

said. Kuwait, whose population fell by 0.2 per cent in 1985-95, now suffers from a housing crisis with an estimated 57,000 Kuwaitis on the government waiting list.

The new city may include up to 40,000 residential units and 2,690 commercial plots built on 250 million square metres of land. Subiyah will be able to accommodate up to 260,000 people. Infrastructure will cost

1.2 billion dinars (\$3.9 billion); public utilities, 340 million dinars (\$1.1 billion); and a causeway linking Subiyah to the capital and Failaka island, in the Arabian Gulf, an estimated 260 million dinars (\$845 million).

Kuwait's parliament must approve the plan before a start date is set. The region around Subiyah has been studied as a potential site for a new city since the early 1980s.

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Jordan Times, Monday, August 17, 1998

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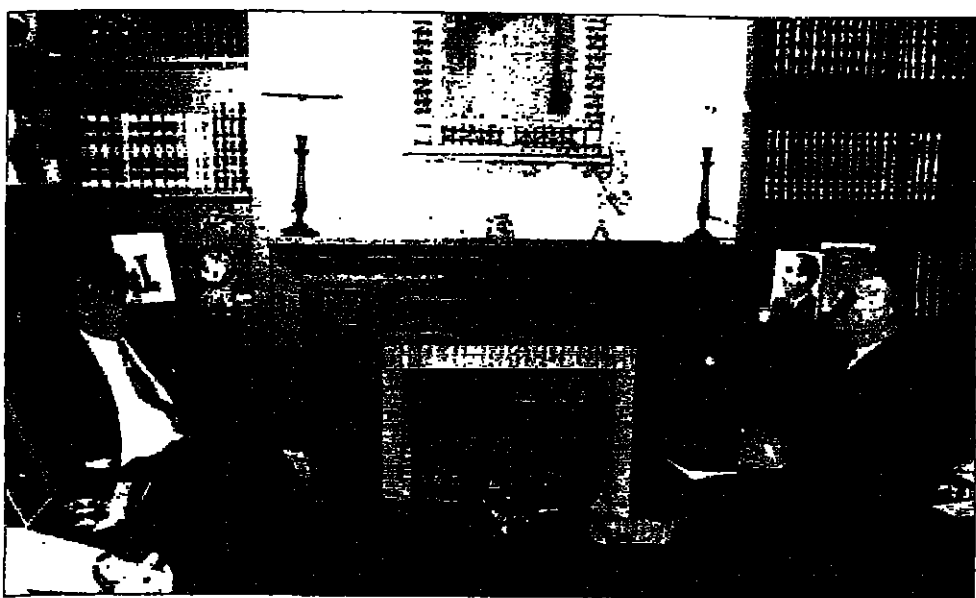
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HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday meets with visiting Indian envoy and Indian Foreign Ministry Secretary General Delip Lahiri (Photo by Boghos)

Regent stresses need for dialogue among Southern Hemisphere nations

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday underlined the need for developing a regional dialogue among the countries of the Southern Hemisphere covering issues of common interest.

Such a dialogue should be conducted within a clear and transparent framework to serve the interests and the stability of the countries in these regions, the Regent said at a meeting with visiting Indian envoy and Indian Foreign Ministry Secretary General Delip Lahiri, who

delivered a message addressed to His Majesty King Hussein from Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The message dealt with means of stimulating a regional dialogue on the eve of the Non-Aligned Nations summit in South Africa.

At the audience, which was also attended by Chief of the Royal Court Fayez Tarawneh, Prince Hassan expressed Jordan's readiness to encourage such an endeavour out of its belief

that dialogue and cooperation are basic elements for tackling security, political, economic and regional questions.

At the meeting, discussion focused on efforts toward ending the deadlock in the peace process and giving impetus to the establishment of a just and durable peace that can guarantee regional stability and safeguard the rights of all parties.

Indian Ambassador H.C.S. Dhody was present at the meeting.

German cyclist arrives in Amman en route to Olympics 2000 in Sydney

By Randa Naffa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the theme "One World 2000... Power and Belief Tour," Horst Schad, a German bicyclist, has reached Amman in his bid to ride to the "other side of the world."

At a press conference held yesterday in Amman, Schad, 34, explained that "despite all the wars and conflicts, it is still possible to forget the borders and ride to the other side of the world."

The journey, which started on May 2, has so far taken him from Germany to Jordan on the way to Australia, where the 60,000-kilometre tour will end.

Schad, in his mission to promote inter-cultural feelings and international understanding, is sponsored by two Olympic committees.

In his tour to travel through a total of 30 countries, Schad said he wishes to "revive the Olympic spirit and promote the idea that people and nations are a part of the same world. It is an idea similar to the torch, a symbol or a letter handed to all nations."

When he reaches Australia, Schad will take part in the official opening ceremony of the Olympics 2000 in Sydney.

The "Power and Belief

Tour," he added, means that every person can achieve something great if he has the necessary "power" and the absolute "belief."

"For me, cycling is the best way to achieve this, because I depend on my own strength to travel and experience nature, meet people and be introduced to their cultures," he said.

The German bicyclist, who is a teacher of English and business at a high school in Frankfurt, described the people here as "very hospitable and friendly."

"Wherever I travel I am always welcomed by people. They always offer food and shelter and that is the greatest thing. It is a difficult mission and without people's help it would never be completed," Schad said.

For Schad, who bicycles eight to 12 hours a day, "Jordan is an exceptional place because it holds the lowest spot on earth — the Dead Sea."

"From the lowest point, I will move on to cross many countries... in Asia and east Asia until I reach the Himalayas — the highest point on earth," Schad said.

In Italy, he met with the pope, which for him was the "most impressive [event] in the tour so far. The pope showed support and encouragement

and stressed that people ought to show some courage, curiosity and interest in other cultures."

No major problems so far have faced Schad and his 18-kilogramme bike. But he said the most, annoying thing, has been the traffic in Syria and the heat wave.

Schad the most important thing over the course of the two-year trip will be to "depend on the mind and think fast, whenever there is difficulty. Keeping the mind going is the most decisive tool."

Schad prepared nearly two years for his journey by concentrating on cycling, long-distance running and exercising in fitness centres.

The cyclist has mastered the basic techniques of self-hypnosis and meditation in order to withstand any psychological stress.

He also read about the different countries, cultures and people he would encounter.

Apart from German he speaks English, French, and has basic knowledge of Chinese, Malaysian, and Indonesian.

Carrying an Olympic message, Horst Schad said he wished in this journey to strengthen ties between people.

'Difficult' circumstances preventing government control of private wells

By Mohammad Ben Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite popular criticism over sky-rocketing water prices, the government appears reluctant to take control of privately run wells, which have become a main source of supplies for Amman residents after a water pollution crisis erupted six weeks ago.

Over the past decades, the government allowed land owners to pump water from wells for agricultural and domestic use in areas that have no direct supplies. There are a total of 1,654 operating wells, according to a 1997 Water Authority report.

Each well has an average pumping capacity of between 50 to 100 cubic metres of water per hour, industry sources, officials and water experts said Sunday.

Owners are required to install metres at all licensed wells to allow the government to take readings to ensure that well owners are not surpassing the annual quota of 50,000 cubic metres of water each.

Violators are required to pay 250 fils per each cubic metre

above the set quota.

However, in most cases, over-pumping continues unabated and metres are occasionally reset or broken, while the government appears to be turning a blind eye on reported violations, according to private and official water industry sources.

Of the 1,654 wells, 528 are unlicensed and therefore have no metres.

Ministry of Water Secretary General Munther Khleifat said economic and legal considerations made it "difficult" for the government to take control of these wells.

"Owners have invested large amounts of money in their wells," he told the Jordan Times. "It is very difficult to take this step without studying the issue carefully and covering all possible aspects."

Khleifat and other officials insist current regulations as well as emergency laws give the government the right to confiscate wells and compensate owners for losses incurred.

However, many believe the state will be reluctant to take such a move to avoid potential trouble from well owners.

"Most of these wells are

owned by big influential families, and the government will have to think twice before taking over their property," said a source at the Ministry of Water who requested anonymity.

He said many well owners, especially those along Airport Road and around Madaba, have refused to cooperate with the government by selling water to the public on the grounds that their supplies hardly meet their own irrigation needs.

"But no action was taken against them to force them to change their stand," he said.

Khleifat, however, denied the government was taking a lax attitude towards well owners.

"When the government takes such a decision, everyone has to abide by it, regardless of social status," Khleifat said.

The government, trying to calm growing public anger over the water pollution crisis, has halted already scant summer tap water supplies and sent teams to supervise distribution at 40 private wells near Amman that have become alternative sources of domestic water supplies.

It is also supposed to crack

down on profiteering well owners and truckers.

But most residents said the two-week-old supervisory measures have not eased their difficulties, as they have to wait for days to get meagre supplies and continue to complain that many tanker drivers and well owners continue to exploit them.

Though the government set the price of a cubic metre of water at JD1.250, many residents said they are spending seven times more than the fixed rate.

Each cubic metre of water is sold to the tanker driver for 300 fils.

The government on Sunday announced that many of the private wells designated for agricultural use could also start selling water to the public.

The decision came a day after authorities said they were forced to temporarily shut down the troubled Zai Water Treatment Plant (ZWP), which is meant to supply 40 per cent of Amman's water needs, while technicians grapple with the problem of having to handle an overload of incoming algae.

The ZWP has been at the

heart of the water contamination problem since the crisis erupted on July 10, when residents of Amman, especially the western areas, began complaining of foul-smelling and murky domestic water supplies.

The government has been under fire, even from His Majesty King Hussein, for issuing contradictory statements ever since the crisis flared.

The crisis culminated with last week's resignation of Minister of Water Munther Hadadin, who initially claimed the problem was caused by unusual levels of algae caused from soaring heat but later blamed it on operational and human errors at ZWP.

Most well owners said confiscating water wells would not solve the current water crisis because of a chronic water deficit and a continued population boom.

However, it could help cool tempers, said some.

"Many of us are willing to sell our water wells to the government provided it also buys the land housing these wells," said the owner of a private well in Baqaa, 17 kilometres north of the capital.

Ministry report reveals lower than estimated figures on country's minorities

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government appears to have accidentally disclosed the tightly-guarded secret of the percentage of religious and ethnic minorities in Jordan.

In a report submitted to the United Nations, the Foreign Ministry revealed that the percentage of Christians in Jordan is "less than four per cent of the population," while Circassians constitute about 1.3 per cent.

Abdul Hadi Alawin, head of the Department of Statistics, told the Jordan Times that he was surprised to find these figures disclosed in the report, published in the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm last week.

"These figures are not from the Department of Statistics. I do not know who the Foreign Ministry's source is," he said yesterday, insisting that the information could not have been leaked by anyone in his unit.

An official at the Foreign

Ministry said the figures in the report, submitted to a U.N. committee for combating worldwide racial discrimination, were based on estimates.

The latest census, released in 1996, stirred a public controversy after the government refused to disclose the numbers of religious and ethnic minorities in the Kingdom and the percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

At the time, the government defended its position by stating that "it is not in the

country's interest" to disclose such information and that "Jordan has no minorities."

Analysts believe that the percentages of minorities were not released because the government feared a backlash from the opposition once they discovered that Christians and Circassians were over-represented in Parliament.

Christians have a quota of nine parliamentary seats out of a total of 80 (11.25 per cent), while Circassians hold three seats (3.75 per cent).

Police investigating woman's death as possible 'honour crime'

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police are investigating the possibility that the death of a 37-year-old divorced woman whose body yesterday was found burnt beyond recognition in her family's house in Tifliah was an "honour crime," official sources said.

The victim, Nawal Ahmad, was found by a Civil Defence Department (CDD) rescue team at 11:15 a.m. Sunday morning after they extinguished a blaze which engulfed the kitchen and the living room.

An official source said that "police have not arrested anyone but began questioning the victim's family."

The source added that the woman, a mother of five, was divorced by her husband yesterday.

"Today [Sunday], police received an anonymous call informing them about the fire at the victim's house," the source said.

He added that "most probably it is a crime of honour, because last week, the woman was caught in an 'immoral situation,' and everyone in the city learned about it."

If her death is confirmed as a crime of honour, Nawal would become the 13th woman reportedly killed for such a reason in the Kingdom this year.

Last year, there were 25 reported cases of honour killings in Jordan.

Brawl victims in hospital

Meanwhile, six people injured Saturday in a brawl that left two other people dead in the Nazal suburb are still being treated at hospitals, an official source said.

The source told the Jordan Times Sunday that the brawl, which began around 8:00 p.m. and involved two clans, was sparked by rivalry over the leadership of the neighbourhood.

He added that the participants in the fight used "different kinds of weapons, including knives, axes, guns and machine guns."

The fighting, which occurred next to Abu Hureirah mosque, left two people aged 21 and 24 dead and six others injured, including one in critical condition.

Criminal Prosecutor Saleh Lawzi announced the arrest of one suspect and is questioning dozens of other individuals involved in the incident.

Ministry to invite private sector to offer limited postal services

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Sami Gammo announced Sunday that interested private-sector parties can submit applications from Aug. 22-Sept. 9 to provide postal services on a commission basis under the ministry's supervision.

"So far the ministry has received 150 applications to carry out this service, and the Cabinet has approved my recommendation to allow such a service, which will ease the pressure on the ministry and the post offices it is currently operating," Gammo told the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said the main objectives behind the decision are to improve the quality of postal services and to expand postal operations to areas not yet covered.

But Gammo stressed that the involvement of the private sector would not be a form of privatisation but rather would be limited to providing support to the ministry.

The firms chosen to open postal services offices will be allowed to receive and forward ordinary and registered mail, postal packages and publications as well as sell stamps, he said.

Such offices, which will only operate domestically, cannot include other ser-

vices without prior approval from the ministry, according to Gammo. In addition, these offices must forward mail within 48 hours and must strictly abide by the ministry's regulations concerning prompt delivery and strict confidentiality.

The ministry stipulates that these offices must provide bank guarantees of JD1,000 and hire competent Jordanian employees and provide the ministry with their names, according to Gammo, who added that these offices should also lease mail boxes at ministry-run post offices to serve as their official addresses.

In return, these offices will receive 20 per cent on the sale of stamps and on fees for clearing packages and other mail, and no extra charges will be required from the public, the minister said.

The ministry has allowed private shopkeepers to offer this service on the outskirts of governorates since the inception of the 1952 Postal Agent Law.

Gammo said privately run postal centres are bound to have a positive impact on the national economy by saving the government the task of opening further post offices and creating new jobs.

what's going on

- CONCERT**
- * Performance by the Indian Star Kathak Group at the Royal Cultural Centre on Tuesday Aug. 18 at 8:00 p.m.
- FILMS**
- * Two films entitled "American Friends" and "Black Beauty" at the British Council, Jhalal Amman on Tuesday Aug. 18 at 7:00 p.m. and Wednesday Aug. 19 at 6:00 p.m. respectively.
- LECTURE**
- * "The Administrative Development in Jordan Between Theory and Application" in Arabic by Dr. Abdullah Ulayyan at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jhalal Amman at 7:00 p.m.
- EXHIBITIONS**
- * Exhibition of wrought iron furniture by Jordanian artist Salim Al Bandak at Al Baider Hall, Kua Zaman village (Tel. 5862531), until Sept. 17.
 - * Summer display of products at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre/Nor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra (Tel. 569-9141/2), until Aug. 31.
 - * "Minutaries in Humanities and Environment" by Walid Nassar at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthman, until Aug. 25 (Tel. 5526932).

A view to a hill — Amman's 'isolated' embassy

By Lee Hockstader

AMMAN — When it opened in 1992, the U.S. Embassy in Jordan was immediately dubbed "Fort Apache" by some of the diplomats who worked there.

Fort Knox is more like it. A security-man's paradise, the state-of-the-art embassy meets every safety standard U.S. experts could dream up: solid steel doors, some thick enough to withstand a half-hour assault by machine guns and battering rams; windows and walls designed to repel artillery rounds; bunkered havens stocked with enough provisions and communications equipment to keep trapped diplomats alive and in touch for more than three days.

And unlike the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, where bombings killed 257 people, the embassy in Amman sits atop a hill, regally remote from the sweltering city below.

"There's a lot to be said for a facility like this. When you look at TV, and what happened in Kenya, no one ever gets anything like that close to this embassy," an American diplo-

mat said.

The trade-off is that the facility here is not universally acclaimed as a user-friendly place, especially for Jordanians. Spread out over 12 acres, and set far back from the surrounding roads, the \$50 million embassy has the grandeur of a palace — and can be nearly as intimidating.

In a city of nearly two million people, the embassy is within walking distance of practically no one. Some local residents, who watched warily as the embassy took shape on a former sheep pasture during the Gulf war, suspected that a huge round warehouse in the back of the complex was a missile silo.

Since the bombings in Africa, embassy officials around the world have been on heightened alert, and business has been suspended at half a dozen embassies. Recently in Amman, when an American visitor waiting in the embassy's main entrance hall jotted some notes, he was promptly confronted by a pair of huffing security officers, who wanted to know his business — and just why he was writing in a pad.

"Sorry," said one of the offi-

cers, James Moss. "This place is state-of-the-art, but still it can have its blind spots."

For Americans who work there, the embassy is a mixed bag. True, it is safer. True, too, it has improved efficiency by gathering seven or eight facilities, agencies and departments that had been spread out all over the city before 1992. But being segregated in such a place 15 or 20 minutes from the centre of town, some diplomats acknowledge, it is more difficult to get out, make contacts with Jordanians and do their jobs.

"If your job is to be in the management side of the embassy all day, or in the support staff, then it's wonderful," said one American diplomat who knows Amman well. "But if you're supposed to be out and about, then it's a bit isolated."

Before the new embassy opened July 4, 1994, most U.S. diplomats worked in a cramped office building in the centre of town, across the street from the Intercontinental Hotel. A small car bomb had exploded in the hotel's parking lot, so the old embassy's facade was heavily sand-bagged.

But Jordan, a moderate Arab country and a major recipient of U.S. assistance, is not considered an especially risky posting for Americans, and the old embassy was part of the city's pulse.

Applicants for visas to the United States would drop by on their lunch breaks to pick up a form. Diplomats wandered out at lunchtime to the grilled-meat sandwich stands down on the corner. A block away, at a low-security building that housed the American Cultural Centre and the U.S. Information Service, an elderly security man seated behind a desk nodded lazily at visitors coming and going to the library, English lessons, lectures, movies and conferences.

"It was easy access, and it was very nice," said Khalwa Abu Qura, who worked at the U.S. Information Service in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Every six months they'd send somebody from Washington, a security officer, to check the fire escapes and change the doors. My secretary would tell them, 'Instead of changing the doors, why don't you change your policy?'"

The atmosphere at the old embassy and cultural centre

was relaxed, said Abu Qura. That's all changed now, she said. "Now it's, my God, even though they know me and I have business there, I have to go through so many doors and gates. It's intimidating."

Construction on the new embassy in Amman began in 1988, five years after the devastating bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and shortly after a commission headed by retired U.S. Adm. Bobby Inman urged that security at American facilities around the world be radically reinforced.

Inman's detailed recommendations were incorporated into the design and placement of the Amman embassy. But when construction began, some diplomats were concerned that it was too far from the centre of town. The only other major buildings within hundreds of yards were the British Embassy and a private club. Sheep wandered through the construction site.

In the new embassy, everything was consolidated. Not only are the chancery, consulate and cultural centre within the walls of the sprawling compound, so is the house where the Marine contingent lives, warehouse, motor pool,

ambassador's residence, commissary and American club for diplomats and selected outsiders, complete with swimming pool.

The complex appeared so vast when it opened that it seemed to some like overkill. At the time just 90 Americans and 150 Jordanians worked full time at the embassy. Today there are more than 125 full-time Americans, plus many others who rotate through on short assignments. About 230 Jordanians work there.

What's more, the opening of the embassy has heralded a real estate boom in Abdoun, the section of western Amman where it is located. Roads have been improved and luxury villas built in the neighbourhood. The Jordanian ministries of transportation, communications and public works have built new headquarters near the embassy. Still, diplomats acknowledge, it is far from most of the action.

"We miss the [sandwich] stand and taking our laundry over to the Intercontinental," said one diplomat. "But now we have grown into this building."

— The Washington Post

Major rebel village falls to Serb police

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — Serb forces have taken the main rebel stronghold in southwestern Kosovo in what appeared to be the final of a crackdown launched last month against ethnic Albanian separatists, Serb sources reported Sunday.

The village of Junik, near the border with Albania, was known as the organisational, logistical and weapons distribution centre for the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army, fighting for independence of Kosovo.

According to a police statement carried by state-run Tanjug news agency, Junik fell to the Serbs late Saturday, after nearly two weeks under siege. No information from Albanian sources was immediately available and the report could not be independently confirmed.

The report said members of the KLA tried to escape across the border to Albania but were blocked by army border guards and eventually "broken down" and dispersed into mountain forests.

Four policemen died in the operation, it said.

Junik, some 75 kilometres west of Pristina, first made headlines last month when

top U.S. envoy, Richard Holbrooke, paid a surprise visit to KLA fighters there. The KLA is fighting for the independence of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians account for 90 per cent of the province's 2 million people.

Over the past weeks government forces purged the KLA from several other major strongholds. Gains by government forces, however, have proved difficult to maintain.

Saturday, government forces launched coordinated attacks on at least nine villages, the ethnic Albanians claimed.

Fighting also raged elsewhere in the province. In Belgrade, independent radio B92 reported that police and the Yugoslav army used tanks and helicopters in the attacks.

Kosovo province is in Serbia. The larger of the two Yugoslav republics.

While Serb forces shelled the villages in an attempt to force the rebels to retreat, the government in Belgrade invited moderate Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova's team to start negotiations as early as next week.

But his party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, said its hopes that

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was serious about peace talks.

Rugova had said earlier that the government offensive must stop before peace talks can begin. In any event, Rugova has been unable to persuade the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army to join him.

The Kosovo Information Centre, which is close to the ethnic Albanian leadership, reported that government forces opened fire at dawn Saturday on Logja and at least eight other villages west of Pristina, the provincial capital.

There was no word on casualties. The area is inaccessible to journalists, but smoke was seen from a distance and detonations were heard.

Forty-six tanks, four jets, eight helicopters and troops transported in 20 trucks joined in the attacks, an ethnic Albanian source said. The Serb Media Centre in Pristina, meanwhile, reported that separatists attacked Serb police who were securing a road near the villages early Saturday. In a counter-attack, it said, police forces pushed KLA rebels into nearby forests.



A Yugoslavian army tank gunner makes a three-fingers salute in celebration as a column of tanks withdraw from the village of Junik, some 90 km south-west of Pristina. After three weeks of heavy fighting the joint forces of Yugoslavian army and police took over Junik, one of the strongholds of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) separatists (Reuters photo)

Cambodia digs in for protracted fight over coalition government

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Despite international pressure, Cambodia's three main political parties dug themselves in over the weekend for a protracted battle over the formation of a coalition government, increasing the likelihood of a constitutional crisis.

Three weeks after the country's first election in five years, the parties were firmly entrenched in wildly opposing camps and hopes of an early resolution to the political stalemate appeared dead.

"Instead of coming together, they're moving further apart and becoming less flexible instead of more," said one Western diplomat. "This is not the scenario we had hoped for."

International frustration with the latest Cambodia imbroglio is beginning to vent itself publicly as senior officials from several countries in the region, French President Jacques Chirac and Yasushi Akashi, the former United Nations envoy to Phnom Penh, all called for a coalition.

"I think it would be highly immoral or irresponsible for the political leaders of Cambodia not to form a government only because of their individual ambitions," Philippines Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon said Saturday.

Apparently unconcerned with the uproar, the opposition alliance of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh's royalist FUNCINPEC party and the self-named party of dissident Sam Rainsy, held firm

to their rejection of the poll results, claiming widespread fraud cost them the election.

They also repeated their demands that strongman Hun Sen be denied the premiership if they eventually accept an offer to join a coalition with his de facto ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP).

"There can be no lasting peace in Cambodia with Hun Sen as prime minister," Sam Rainsy said.

The CPP was quick to respond, issuing a statement accusing the opposition of trying to interfere in its internal affairs, warning the attempt would fail and reiterating its support for Hun Sen as prime minister.

"The CPP respects the integrity of other political parties and wishes that other parties would stop interfering in the CPP's internal affairs, they are just spending a lot of energy to accomplish nothing," it said.

The CPP stands to take a majority of seats in parliament but not enough to form a government on its own, making a coalition with at least FUNCINPEC apparently inevitable.

But the opposition has rejected those offers citing their outstanding complaints, all of which were rejected by the National Election Committee and have now been appealed to the Constitutional Council.

The opposition contends that both the committee and the council are biased in favour of the CPP, a charge it says is backed up by the fact that the council

has agreed to hear only a fraction of the appeals.

While waiting for the appeals to be heard — a process that could last until Aug. 29 — the opposition has already upped the ante for its cooperation not only with its demand for Hun Sen's removal but also for royal pardons for five exiled former civilian and military officials.

All five, including two members of the royal family and three military commanders, were convicted for either plotting to overthrow the government or to assassinate Hun Sen.

Hun Sen has several times refused angrily to give his approval for the amnesties which King Norodom Sihanouk has said he will not grant without the strongman's approval.

Receiving Prince Ranariddh's request for the pardons late last week, the King forwarded the proposal to Hun Sen who has not yet responded.

"The request is clearly designed for one thing, to ratchet up the pressure on Hun Sen," said another Phnom Penh-based diplomat. "Whether it works or not is beyond the point. The point is to try to keep the pressure on and hope he breaks."

But few analysts believe either Hun Sen or the CPP will break and as long as the opposition stays as firm and united as they appear to be now, most see an extended period of instability as Cambodia attempts to struggle forward without a government.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Primitive tribe threatened by new road in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A new road is threatening the future of a primitive Indian tribe by bringing illness to which tribes people have no resistance, the O Globo newspaper reported Sunday. A number of the 300 tribesmen and women, known as Enawene-nawes, have fallen ill after eating food given them by travellers on the road, O Globo said. "The tribe does not have immunity against simple influenza and an outbreak of sickness could be fatal for all of them," Sebastiao Carlos Moreira, state coordinator of the Indigenous Missionary Group, was quoted as saying. The Enawene-nawes, who speak their own dialect and do not understand Brazil's national language of Portuguese, have traditionally survived on a diet of fish and vegetables. They live in Mato Grosso state, 1,800 kms northwest of Rio. Construction of the 50-km road linking Mato Grosso with the Amazon region was finished two months ago. It was apparently built illegally by farmers keen to facilitate soybean production and transportation. The state prosecutor general called for an inquiry into the building of the road and federal police have launched an investigation, according to O Globo.

Methane blast kills 16 in Ukrainian mine

MOSCOW (AP) — A methane blast deep inside a coal mine in eastern Ukraine killed at least 16 miners Sunday, an emergency official said. The blast struck 600 meters underground at 12:40 a.m. Sunday (2:40 GMT Saturday) in a mine in Luhansk, a city 700 kilometres east of Kiev, according to a duty officer for Ukraine's Emergency Ministry who spoke on customary condition of anonymity. He said 28 miners were underground at the time of the blast, and the bodies of 16 victims had been found by noon. Four other miners have been hospitalised with injuries and eight miners remain missing. Investigators are working to determine the cause of the blast, he said. More than 200 miners have already died this year in Ukraine's deteriorating coal mines. The worst single accident occurred in April, when a methane blast killed 63 workers at a mine in the eastern region of Donetsk. Ukraine's government blames the accidents on neglect of safety rules and outdated equipment.

British Foreign Office scraps old-fashioned cables

LONDON (AFP) — The time honoured system of diplomatic telegrams which have notified successive British foreign secretaries of events around the world is to be scrapped. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has ordered that they should be replaced by a system of secure e-mails capable of flashing messages around the globe in a matter of seconds. By 2000, diplomats at all Britain's 221 overseas posts will send messages — often containing highly classified information as well as first reports of historic events — to London through desk-to-desk e-mail. It will replace the old system of dedicated telegrams dating back to 1852.

Guerrillas abduct gorilla-viewing tourists

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Four Western tourists were abducted earlier this week by Hutu rebels in Congo, a Ugandan newspaper reported Sunday. The state-owned New Vision did not identify tourists by name. It said their group included people from Canada, Switzerland, Sweden and New Zealand. The abductions took place Tuesday, it said. Two of the tourists escaped and were helped by Congolese villagers, the newspaper reported. It said the tourists were in the region to see rare mountain gorillas in the Virunga National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest on the Uganda-Rwanda border. Armed Hutu insurgents from the former Rwandan army still roam the reserves. The report said the tourists' vehicle was travelling through thick, bamboo-forested mountains when it was showered with gunfire. About 10 men confronted the tourists, it said. The New Vision said two tourists escaped by running into the jungle. Congolese villagers later helped them return to Uganda, the newspaper said. The incident happened near the Congolese village of Kisoro, 20 kilometres from the Ugandan border town of Kisoro. Kisoro is 480 kilometres southwest of Kampala, the Ugandan capital. It was not possible to confirm the report. Government and diplomatic offices in Uganda were closed Sunday and neither of the national parks have telephone links with the outside world. Hundreds of tourists every year visit the parks, which are home to about 600 mountain gorillas, among the last still remaining in the world.

Shanghai swelters in record heat wave

SHANGHAI (R) — While other parts of China suffer from heavy rains and floods, Shanghai is wilting under a heat wave that has sent temperatures soaring to their highest levels in more than half a century. The thermometer reached 39.4 degrees Celsius Saturday, the highest level in the big east China city in 54 years, the official Wen Hui newspaper said Sunday. More than 20 days of temperatures topping 35 degrees Celsius have been recorded since the end of June, the newspaper quoted officials as saying. Sales of air conditioners have been unusually brisk and power consumption has surged. Commuters have sought refuge on the city's air-conditioned buses while pedestrians have found relief in damp towels draped over their heads. A newspaper cartoon showed the city's famed Oriental TV Tower sweating heavily and sipping a cool beverage through a straw. Weather officials had a few words of comfort for long-suffering residents, saying Shanghai could get a share of east China's rains over the next few days.

Quake measuring 5.2 on Richter scale hits Japanese mountain resort

TOKYO (AFP) — An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale jolted a mountain resort in central Japan Sunday in the latest of ten days of minor tremors in the region, officials said. The quake struck at 3:31 a.m. (18:31 GMT) in Nagano prefecture some 200 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, the meteorological agency said. There were no reports of casualties or damage, police said. Since Aug. 7, the agency had recorded 4,245 quakes, 134 of which could be felt by people, officials said. The epicentre of the quake was close to Kamikochi, a summer resort area where tens of thousands of people are spending mid-August holidays. Earthquakes in Nagano would persist because seismic activity had yet to subside, the agency official said, calling for people to take precautions. "We expect minor and moderate quakes will continue for the time being," the official said. "We keep monitoring the region very carefully."

Charges pressed against seven Serbs after murder of police officer

PALE. Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — Police in the Serb-held part of Sarajevo pressed charges Saturday against a "terrorist group" of seven people suspected of murdering a police officer on Aug. 7, Bosnian Serb television said, quoting a police report.

All seven are in custody for their alleged part in the murder of Srdjan Knezevic, the deputy police chief of the Serb-held quarter of the Bosnian capital, on Aug. 7, the report said.

Well-informed sources from Pale said all seven were providing security for top Bosnian Serb politicians including war-time leader Radovan Karadzic during the 43-month war.

But according to the police report all seven are unemployed at the moment.

Karadzic's wife Saturday denied a report

that appeared the day before that their son was being held in connection with the murder.

Ljiljana Karadzic said the report was a "terrible lie" and said her son Sasa had not been in the Serb entity Republika Srpska since July 10.

Radovan Karadzic himself is wanted by the U.N. war crimes tribunal for genocide and crimes against humanity over his role in the 1992-1995 Bosnian conflict.

The U.N. mission in Bosnia announced Friday that 14 people had been arrested for the murder, and gave no names or details.

According to Bosnian Serb television, however, two of the detainees, Zeljko Jankovic and Dusan Tesic, are former members of an anti-terrorist group with the Bosnian Serb entity police.

The television said the

two had organised a "terrorist group" called Torn.

Jankovic and Tesic were also raising money for the group's activities.

Members of the Torn group were based in two houses in Pale, one of which was used as Bosnian Serb police headquarters during the 1992-95 war.

Knezevic was murdered in front of his house in Serb stronghold of Pale, when an unidentified gunman fired 20 bullets into his body.

Knezevic's murder has raised tensions between hardline and moderate camps in Bosnian Serb entity ahead of Sept. 12-13 general elections.

Milovan Stankovic, the interior minister in the Western-backed government of Republika Srpska, has accused hardliners close to Karadzic of the murder.

American balloonist races across Australia

ST. LOUIS (Reuters) — U.S. pilot Steve Fossett raced across Australia on strong high altitude winds in his bid to become the first person to circle the world nonstop in a balloon, possibly reaching the coast by Sunday morning.

After more than 10 hours at altitudes often approaching 9,144 metres and speeds reaching 225.8 kph, Fossett passed through south central Australia north of Adelaide to approach the coast, team members said.

Under current conditions, Fossett was expected to pass just north of Brisbane on Australia's east coast at about 7:30 a.m. EDT (11:30 GMT) Sunday, team member Doug Blount said.

"He's been really smoking," Blount said. "Right now we are pretty well on track for exiting near Gladstone, about 320 km north of Brisbane." His control centre at Washington University

in St. Louis said Fossett reluctantly descended to about 6,096 metres for an hour Saturday in an effort to redirect the balloon from what was considered too northerly a heading.

The 54-year-old financial markets millionaire reascended after finding the descent did little to change direction, but reduced speed to about 88 kph, team members said.

At about 11:30 p.m. EDT Saturday (03:30 GMT Sunday), Fossett was travelling near 8,534 metres at about 210 kph, Blount said.

"Right now the weather patterns are uncertain, and we don't like uncertainty," Blount said. "Some winds want to tug us north, which we really don't want. We are looking for patterns that will take us straight east." If the team elects to descend and reduce speed, that could change the projections by about two

hours, Blount added.

"The next 12 hours are going to be fairly critical, once we get out past that point, we should be in some pretty steady winds that will carry us all the way," Blount said.

Blount also said that the issue of oxygen supply has not been resolved entirely, although Fossett appears to have enough to last six days at present levels. The liquid oxygen tanks lose a certain amount each day, whether used or not.

"If we can get far enough across the Pacific and fly at lower altitude, we are still OK," Blount said.

Blount said Fossett could reach the coast of South America in six to eight days if present conditions are maintained and cross the Andes in a matter of hours.

Australia affords Fossett the last substantial chance to abort the mission over land should he decide

he cannot make the long final leg over water.

If he has to ditch in the ocean, his balloon capsule is designed to float and he also has a four-man life raft. His control centre said it would alert the nearest ship if he did go down over water.

Fossett has a satellite telephone but has done nearly all of his communications via e-mail through a satellite link that produces a fax at his control centre. He has avoided using the telephone because it is a drain on the battery and takes a scientific experiment on board the craft offline when he uses it.

Fossett made three previous tries for the around-the-world mark, all of them in the northern hemisphere. The current expedition could last 18 days. Information on the flight is available on the Internet at <http://solospirit.wafl.edu>.

Scientists warn against abuse of genetics as weapon against people

BEIJING (AFP) — Geneticists meeting in China have been urged by the International Genetics Federation (IGF) against allowing their expertise to become a potential weapon against humanity, reports said Sunday.

"Any new knowledge can be used as potential weapons against people," Xinhua news agency quoted IGF Secretary General Anthony Griffiths as saying.

"To avoid the abuse of this knowledge you must ensure that it is used to complement the goal... of a better life for all," Griffiths told the 18th Congress of Genetics, which convened in Beijing.

Some 2,000 experts from around the world attended the conference, which ended Saturday, Xinhua said.

genome research, the breeding of high-yielding hybrid rice, gene therapy and transgenic technology, it said.

China, while initially expressing caution in the wake of the cloning of Dolly the sheep by a Scottish scientist, has since announced plans to save its endangered national symbol, the giant panda, by cloning.

While a political row blew up recently in Britain over the effects of genetically modified foods on humans, there has been relatively little public debate in China so far on the ethics and effects of genetic engineering.

Zhao Shouyuan of Fudan University in Shanghai was chosen Saturday as the new president of the IGF, which holds its next congress in Melbourne in 2003.

truck full of government soldiers evacuated as the rebels shot at them

Myanmar opposition

YANGON (AFP) — Myanmar's main opposition group, the National League for Democracy (NLD), leader Aung San Suu Kyi, said she would not return to the country until the military government had agreed to a new constitution.

Suu Kyi, who has been in house arrest since 1989, said she would not return to the country until the military government had agreed to a new constitution. She said the constitution should guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities and provide for a federal system of government.

S. Korea North on

SEOUL (AFP) — Bitter South and North Korean celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) were overshadowed by a report that North Korea had released 94 political prisoners.

The report, which came from a South Korean source, said the prisoners were released as part of a peace initiative between the two Koreas.

The prisoners included 74 men and 20 women, mostly young people, who had been held in North Korean camps for political reasons.

The release of the prisoners was seen as a positive step towards improving relations between the two Koreas.

The prisoners were released as part of a peace initiative between the two Koreas.

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World News

Jordan Times, Monday, August 17, 1998



A truck full of government soldiers passes through streets of the capital, Kinshasa. Many foreign nationals have been evacuated as the rebel forces prepare the final assault on the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Reuters photo)

Myanmar junta gives cakes to opposition leader in roadside standoff

BANGKOK (AFP) — Myanmar's junta Sunday gave cakes to opposition leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to help her "pass the time" on the fifth day of her roadside standoff with security forces outside Yangon.

Diplomats in the Myanmar capital said the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader was still in her van near a bridge just 25 kilometres outside Yangon after being blocked from visiting provincial supporters Wednesday last week.

They said the van, also carrying two drivers and an NLD official, had been towed Saturday to the bridge where she spent six days in a similar confrontation last month.

"As far as I know she's in good health and she's in the same position," one diplomat told AFP.

Although the standoff is widely interpreted as a protest against the military regime's restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi's movements, a junta spokesman Sunday said the opposition leader was in a "camping vehicle" and was "visiting Anyarsu, a small but picturesque village outside Yangon."

"Ms Suu Kyi left Yangon on Aug. 12 on her way to the city of Patheingyi, but regrettably, recent threats of violence have made travel there by prominent persons inadvisable at this time," the junta spokesman said in a statement received here.

"Until safety conditions improve, Ms Suu Kyi is visiting Anyarsu, a small but picturesque village outside Yangon, while the government of Myanmar continues to make every effort to ensure their comfort and safety."

The junta earlier said it had supplied musical cassettes including religious songs and recordings by Madonna and Michael Jackson for Aung San Suu Kyi's enjoyment, as well as an ambulance in case of an emergency.

"In addition to the amenities and entertainment provided by the government to Ms Suu Kyi in helping her pass the time comfortably, government officials provided imported cakes, cookies and soft drinks this

morning," the statement said.

"(It) is also in the process of setting up a mobile bathroom near her camping vehicle to ensure her maximum comfort and welfare."

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Friday the confrontation with Aung San Suu Kyi had reached its "moment of truth" and the international community needed to step up pressure on the junta.

"Aung San Suu Kyi is again asserting her basic right to move freely in her country," Albright said in Washington.

The NLD won 1990 elections with a vast majority but the junta has refused to give up power.

S. Korea holds out olive branch to North on 50th anniversary of split

SEOUL (AFP) — Bitter rivals South and North Korea celebrated their 50th birthdays separately this weekend with Seoul offering a new olive branch in the hope of ending half a century of suspicion and fear.

Reformist President Kim Dae-Jung called for a new dawn in ties between the ideological enemies, proposing to send a special envoy to Pyongyang and to set up the first standing mechanism for high-level talks between the two Koreas.

And, as he urged for the "wall of mistrust" separating them to be torn down, he began chipping away at North Korea's bogeyman image here by freeing 94 political prisoners — many of them accused of supporting Pyongyang.

The 94, along with 2,174 other convicts, walked free from prisons across the country Saturday under a sweeping presidential amnesty to mark the golden jubilee of South Korea's founding on Aug. 15, 1948.

Among those freed was one of Seoul's most prominent political detainees, dissident poet Park No-Hae, jailed for life seven years ago for leading an underground leftist group.

But as one of the broadest

amnesties ever granted here embraced a total of 7,007 people, human rights watchdog Amnesty International said it did not go far enough and attacked a key condition attached to the pardons.

Seventeen long-term prisoners, including Woo Yong-Gak, 69, who has been behind bars for more than 40 years on charges of spying for North Korea, were not included as they refused to sign a pledge to obey the South's laws.

The London-based group called on President Kim — himself a former dissident and prisoner — to free the 360 remaining prisoners of conscience to be released unconditionally and for a halt to continuing arrests.

More than 100 people had been detained under a draconian national security law — which tends to target those deemed to be Pyongyang sympathisers — since Kim took office, it said.

But Kim made it clear in his anniversary address that he is serious about political and economic reforms, especially his conciliatory "Sunshine Policy" towards the North.

Offering to send a special representative to Pyongyang, he also said he

wanted to set up the first ever permanent joint contact body to maintain dialogue.

Kim wants to prise open full communication channels and to permanently sever a link between economic and cultural contacts and political and security issues.

Relations between the mirror-image rivals — one an economically crippled and fanatically Communist nation, the other a capitalist powerhouse — have scarcely advanced past open hostility since they were separated at birth 50 years ago.

In June, two bungled North Korean espionage operations here came to light threatening to sink Kim's Sunshine Policy which has pitted him against his own security establishment and has even, ironically, been slammed by the North.

But analysts say that Kim's "enlightened" rule has offered the first glimmer of hope for a thaw in inter-Korean enmity.

"The overriding impression is that he is different from all the past South Korean leaders. He is genuinely pushing for a warming and reconciliation, despite all the obstacles and difficulties that his efforts are facing," one said.

But they warn that a lasting peace is still a long way off, and government sources here say privately they do not envisage — or want — reunification in the foreseeable future as the cost to financial crisis-hit Seoul would be too great.

Kim has rejected the pledges of some predecessors to strangle the North into collapse and has been quick to attempt to transform the Sunshine Policy from rhetoric into action.

Brushing aside some intense opposition, he has allowed unprecedented business, cultural and humanitarian contacts, despite the military tension.

"He'll keep on, unless something snaps, like a major terrorist incident occurs," a western analyst said.

But even as Kim called for rapprochement, the anniversary threw into relief the lingering gulf between the two nations with clashes and reported arrests of pro-North Korean students here.

They were demanding to be allowed to attend Pyongyang's anniversary rally in the border town of Panmunjom, a village which was mooted to be a joint celebration until a row erupted over the details.

He added that the main reinforcements for the inner cities come from the National Police.

"But the situation has been safe so far, proving that the rumours are so far only rumours," he said and added that "the troops are not yet at the first level of alert."

Visible in the main streets here, police armed with

assault rifles stood guard at main intersections as they have for the past few days in the capital where many residents have left for the long weekend.

Friday, flights out of Jakarta were booked out, mainly by ethnic-Chinese who were targeted in the savage May riots in which 1,000 people were killed and many were raped.

Foreigners quit Kinshasa, Kabila out of town

KINSHASA (R) — Attempts to ship out foreign nationals from Kinshasa by ferry ran into obstacles Sunday but others left by air to escape fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Hundreds are fleeing the vast central African nation after Rwandan-backed rebels said they were marching on the capital in a two-week-old revolt against President Laurent Kabila.

"Kabila should quit power, or we will capture him alive," a rebel commander, Sylvain Mbuki, told a rally of some 4,000 people Saturday in the eastern town of Bukavu.

The rebels hold towns in the east, on the border with Rwanda and Burundi, and in the west on the strategic Congo River corridor linking Kinshasa to the sea. Spokesmen have said that they are marching on Kinshasa after regrouping in the key river port of Matadi, less than 400 km from the capital.

A Nigerian plane carrying 300 Lebanese expatriates fleeing the Congo arrived in Beirut early Sunday. A babe-in-arms and an elderly woman in a wheelchair were among some 100 expatriates flown to Pretoria by the South African Air Force.

"We left because the rebels are close to Kinshasa

and no one there can guarantee our safety," said Peter Weber, a German timber company manager aboard the South African flight.

"Kabila's forces are very nervous and tense. Foreigners should be careful," said another German, Arnold Roeder. "It looks like the rebels have a great chance to take over Kinshasa... Kabila's forces look weak and I don't think they will put up a good fight."

Kabila seized power in the former Zaire in May 1997, toppling veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko with the help of Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated army.

The latest revolt, led by soldiers from Congo's ethnic Tutsi Banyamulenge minority, erupted in the east of Africa's third largest nation on Aug. 2 after Kabila ordered all remaining Rwandan soldiers to leave.

His relations with Rwanda and Uganda soured over policy differences on restoring stability to the former Zaire and to volatile Central Africa, and on the role of the Banyamulenge.

Rwanda and Uganda both strenuously deny charges that they are involved this time, but independent sources say that Rwandan soldiers have once again joined the revolt.

Former colonial power Belgium put on evacuation

flights Saturday and Sunday and the United States, still under the shock of bomb attacks on its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, temporarily closed its Kinshasa mission.

France said 87 French nationals and about 80 other foreigners arrived in Paris by plane Sunday from Brazzaville, capital of the neighbouring Congo Republic.

But diplomats said French efforts to ferry more people from Kinshasa to Brazzaville across the Congo River ran into problems Sunday. The Kinshasa authorities declined to open the port, citing administrative problems.

"We have started directing people to the airport where Belgium is putting on flights," one French diplomat told Reuters, adding that a fresh attempt would be made Monday to resume the ferry shuttle.

Diplomats say that 700 or so foreign nationals had requested passage out of the country after Western governments advised their nationals to leave.

Kinshasa was calm with the usual Sunday mix of church services, routine chores and sports and leisure. There was little overt sign of extra military activity.

Kabila himself was in the

southern city of Lubumbashi with some of his ministers. Government colleagues said he would return to Kinshasa late Sunday.

Kabila's political chief of staff, Abdoulaye Yerodia, expressed surprise at the departure of the foreign nationals. "I am perplexed," he told state television in an interview Saturday night, likening the exodus to "rats leaving a ship".

Officials said that Yerodia had talks in Kinshasa Sunday with a delegation of African foreign ministers who were mandated by an Aug. 8 regional summit in Zimbabwe, attended by Kabila, to try to broker a peaceful settlement.

The foreign ministers of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and Tanzania also have a mandate to investigate Kabila's accusations against neighbours Rwanda and Uganda.

Yerodia and Kabila's Information Minister Didier Mumenzi, who appeared on state television dressed in military fatigues, played down talk of rebel advances.

Mumenzi said that government forces were recapturing occupied territory from positions in Matadi. "From there our forces are advancing to retake (territory), area by area, house by house," he said.

Truth commission's door slams shut on Botha

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — The door of South Africa's truth commission has slammed shut on apartheid president P.W. Botha and his fate is now in the hands of the courts, commission chairman Archbishop Desmond Tutu told AFP.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which is prosecuting Botha for ignoring a subpoena to appear at a human rights violations hearing in December, had repeatedly said it would drop charges should the former president have a change of heart.

But the TRC's mandate to hold public hearings on apartheid-era human rights crimes expired at the end of July and the option to give verbal, on-the-record testimony is no longer available to 82-year-old Botha were he to relent at the eleventh hour.

"Mr. Botha's fate no longer lies in the hands of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission's human right violations committee," Tutu said in a statement to AFP.

"That committee no longer has subpoena powers and, as far as we are concerned, the matter now lies in the hands of the court."

Botha returns to the magistrate's court in the south coast resort town of George Monday for what is expected to be the last day of evidence in a frequently-interrupted trial.

Botha's defence lawyers have said they will complete their closing argument Monday; Magistrate Victor Lugajhu said he plans to deliver judgement on Aug. 24.

If found guilty, the octogenarian, who has displayed a belligerent attitude throughout proceedings, faces an unspecified fine or a jail term of up to two years.

The TRC had wanted to grill Botha — whose autocratic rule of South Africa from 1978 until 1989 earned

him the nickname "Great Crocodile" — on his State Security Council (SSC), a panel of security chiefs which allegedly ordered political assassinations and bloody cross-border raids.

A number of witnesses, among them convicted police death squad commander Eugene de Kock, have told the court the SSC ordered the killing of anti-apartheid activists and that Botha personally ordered buildings housing anti-apartheid groups bombed.

State lawyers have wrapped up their case against Botha, saying he had no legal right to ignore the subpoena and claiming that he is deliberately hampering the work of the commission, which is probing human rights crime committed during apartheid.

Botha's lawyers began their closing argument on June 15 by claiming there was agreement between Tutu and Botha that the octogenarian would

not have to testify in person if he made a written submission.

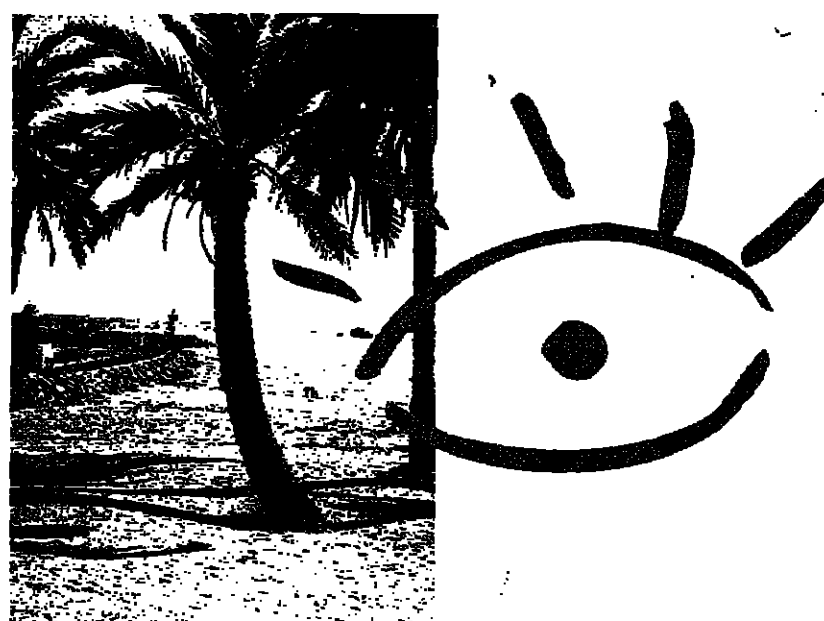
The lawyers accused the commission of being prejudiced against Botha, the SSC and the apartheid armed forces. They also maintained that the subpoena had been "fatally defective and is therefore void of force and effect."

Since the trial was adjourned on June 15, apartheid police minister Adriaan Vlok has confirmed part of De Kock's evidence, telling the TRC Botha personally gave the order for the 1988 bombing of Khotso House in Johannesburg, which housed the anti-apartheid South African Council of Churches.

Botha, who has suffered a stroke and has had a hip replacement operation, on June 22 married legal secretary Barbara Robertson, 57, in a private ceremony at his home in Wilderness, adjoining George.

Plane crashes into van on highway, kills at least 3

BLUE ASH, Ohio (AP) — A small plane crashed into a van on a highway Saturday night, killing at least three people, police said. The single-engine aircraft went down on the westbound lane of the busy highway shortly after 11 p.m. (0500 GMT) and collided with the van, said Blue Ash police officer Rick Burdick. The plane crashed about 2 1/2 miles east of the airport in Blue Ash, a suburb of Cincinnati. Burdick not know if the plane had just left the airport or was trying to land there. Police were clearing motorists from the stretch of the highway. No other details were available. It was the second small plane crash in the Cincinnati area Saturday. John Krieg, 57, of Wyoming, Ohio, died after his plane nearly hit two houses, crashed in a field and rolled onto a road near Amelia, east of Cincinnati.



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The message in the delegation

IF CHARGES that the Jordan Times sensationalised the water story, blew it out of proportion, thus contributing to the current water crisis, and personally targeted the former minister of water and irrigation are true, then the Jordan Times wields more power than the editorial staff have hitherto believed it could. Be that as it may, His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, do not depend on us or any other newspaper to tell them what is happening here and there or at the Zai Water Treatment Plant. The minister of water and irrigation did not resign because of the media reports. He did so because he was asked to resign. Yet, he alone is not to blame for the water crisis. The responsibility, echoing His Majesty's words, is that of the government and the bureaucracy which seem to defy the King's repeated calls for reform.

Now that the Majali government has declared water pumped from Zai to be fit once again for human consumption, the crisis itself should be left behind, and work should concentrate on devising ways and means to ensure that such incidents are not repeated. That of course requires a strong and coherent government that has vision and a clear mandate to handle the many woes the country is facing and to build on previous achievements. A government comprised of persons reputed for their integrity, open-mindedness and sound managerial skills. A government that does not resort to draconian laws to conceal its weaknesses and the mismanagement of our affairs. The outgoing minister of water had said in an interview with a local daily that he was amazed by the onslaught on people in responsibility. He said he had thought and still thinks that a "public post has sanctity that should not be breached." That seems to be the way many officials think. But we think that people in public posts should at all times be held accountable to the leadership, people and Parliament. The media's role is to unveil the truth.

That His Majesty the King delegated to the Regent the power to dismiss governments and ministers and accept their resignations is a strong message that should not escape the attention of people or government.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek, discussing the subject of long terms of heads of state in the Arab World, criticised what he termed so-called democratically elected heads of state for retaining their positions for 25 years and longer, running their countries as uncrowned monarchs. Fanek argues that a country's leadership has to change hands regularly, that in open and democratic societies, with strong democratic institutions, that are able to absorb an occasional shock, this does not constitute a problem. But in "closed" societies, the writer said, succession does not always run quite as smoothly. He criticised some foreign publication use of His Majesty King Hussein's illness to speculate about the future leadership of the Kingdom. He argued that King Hussein's illness is curable, that the issue of succession has been settled and that the continuity of the regime and the lasting stability of the country are guaranteed. Fanek reminded his readers, that 47 years ago, under much more strained political circumstances, power smoothly passed from King Abdullah to Prince Talal and then one year later from King Talal to the then only 17-year-old Prince Hussein. The writer also cited HRH Prince Hassan's 30 years of experience as Crown Prince, leadership experience he has gained from King Hussein. Fanek said.

Al Dustour's Jihad Momani discussed the Jordan Telecommunications Company's (JTC) current move to reduce prices on international calls at the expense of local phone call rates. Momani asked who will benefit from this move. International lines are mainly used by Jordan's wealthy, who call relatives living abroad, mainly in the Gulf, he said. Hence, a reduction of the price of international calls, the writer argued, will lead to an increased amount of calls as well as to longer calls. These people do not have difficulties settling their phone bills, Momani said. Only the JTC will gain by this move, he said adding that increasing the price of local calls will only increase the company's revenue. Even a 10 fils raise in the bill of a subscriber will result in millions more in profits for JTC, Momani said. Ordinary Jordanians will feel the hike and might therefore restrict the number of phone-calls they make, or they may discover that their phone line has been cut because they could not pay their increased bill.

Economic Review

Privatisation is needed for a quick recovery

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

THE TRADE deficit in the first six months of 1998 was \$1,076 million, which is 5.8 percentage points lower than the \$1,142 million trade deficit in the first six months of 1997. This figure is consistent with the expected growth rate of 2.7 per cent for this year, which is higher than the 2.2 per cent estimated for last year. The increase in growth is possibly due to the adjustment in market expectations to the "no-peace/no-war in the Middle East" paradigm of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet. (The model has benefited Israel the least as its unemployment reached 9.5 per cent last month, a 60 per cent increase in unemployment since June 1996, when Netanyahu took office.)

Furthermore, there has been great improvement in the growth rate of investments. Investment spending increased from JD348 million in 1996 to JD379.2 million in 1997; i.e., investments grew by a respectable rate of 9 per cent. Foreign investment reached JD123.7 million (32.6 per cent of total investment spending) in 1997, 60 per cent of which were direct investments.

These tremendous improvements signal that investment promotion efforts are paying off and that the economy is heading out of the 1996 slump.

But Jordan still needs the revenues of privatisation — slowing the pace will only slow the recovery because borrowing is not the answer to economic ailments; on the contrary, many present market flows have arisen from excessive borrowing to finance projects that crowded out the private sector and generated more bureaucracy. Jordan needs to continue to privatise because increasing productivity and efficiency is a must in a global economy investors, including Jordanian ones, can easily access other, more lucrative, markets.

Moreover, institutional investors now have the international reach to go wherever good companies are being privatised. Basically, if Jordanian investors do not find profitable investment opportunities in Jordan they may easily approach other markets where the rate of return is higher and investment opportunities are in abundance.

(An investment-banking expert recently made the very

astute observation that investments look elsewhere outside Jordan because among other things, such as the dearth of privatisation activity most investment-worthy businesses are owned by families which traditionally are buyers of shares, not sellers, particularly when some of them are also bank owners. Therefore, investors who want to invest in Jordan must start completely new investments instead of buying into existing ones.)

Annual global revenues from privatisation have grown dramatically over the past 10 years from \$2 billion in 1988 to \$25 billion in 1996 (up from \$21 billion in 1995, a 20 per cent increase). Total proceeds worldwide from privatisation for 1990-1996 were \$155,667 million. These figures understate the size of privatisation revenues because they do not include the proceeds from privatisation of Central and Eastern Europe, which have mass privatised billions of dollars in assets in recent years. The sectors that received the most funds were infrastructure (\$65,481 million), industry (\$37,063 million), agriculture (\$25,771 million), financial services (\$22,182 million), and other services (\$5,163 million).

In addition, most investments between 1990-1996 (\$69,636 million) went into foreign direct investment (\$43,164 million, 60 per cent of total investments) while the rest (\$26,472 million) went to portfolio investment. Still, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region only received 2 per cent of these revenues with the majority of the funds going to Egypt, the only economy in the whole region that did well in 1996.

Until 1993, Egypt's revenues from privatisation were dismal by any standard: that year they jumped to \$118 million, and more than tripled in 1994 to \$393 million. The flow of these revenues slowed down in 1995 to \$262 million, only to rebound under the new political leadership of Al-Ghazouli as they rose to an astronomical \$1150 million in 1996, totalling \$1,923 million for the period 1990-1996. (Egypt has recently announced that it is also opening up the energy sector for investment. It is privatising its giant electricity sector, which is worth close to \$42 billion.)

The only Arab country in the region to come close to

Egypt in terms of revenues was Morocco, which started at almost the same time as Egypt in 1993, averaging around \$280 million a year and generating a total for the period of \$1130 million. A far third was Tunisia which started earlier than the rest but after Jordan in 1990 with \$2 million in revenues, reaching a peak of \$60 million in 1992 and ending up with \$6 million in 1996, generating a total of \$148 million. The rest of the Middle East and North Africa region generated a total of \$310 million for the whole period. In addition, the privatisation winners in the MENA were able to raise \$594 million in foreign exchange during the period.

Now that Jordan has established a world class stock exchange market, separating the regulatory functions from the operations, all that is needed is liquidity, something which privatisation usually provides. For example, Morocco has significantly improved the liquidity of its stock exchange market as the volume of shares traded between 1992-1996 jumped from 1.8 million to 12.5 million. In dollar terms, trading volume increased from \$198 million (0.7 per cent of GDP or 10.6 per cent of market capitalisation) in 1992 to \$1157 million (2.9 per cent of the GDP or 12.7 per cent of market capitalisation) in 1996. As for privatisation, which the Jordanian stock market also needs, the market capitalisation in Morocco increased from \$1,869 million in 1992 to \$8,779 million in 1996. Another added benefit which Morocco received from having such an aggressive privatisation programme was the revaluation of non-privatised stocks, which resulted, as the average price-earnings ratio jumped from 10.5 per cent in December 1992 to 15 per cent in December 1996.

Jordan can speed the economic recovery with a more aggressive privatisation campaign. Otherwise, neither the investment climate nor productivity will reach the levels needed to fulfill the goals of the economic reform programme.

The examples of the success of similar strategies elsewhere are mounting and the evidence is more than convincing. Halting privatisation for any reason is a shameful waste. Let's not wait too long.

Holy warriors break ranks

By David Hirst

AT THE end of July an "important announcement" appeared on an Arabic web site — <http://www.almuraboton.net> — "in the name of God the merciful, the compassionate".

It consisted of a brief interview which the journal Al-Murabitoun — mouthpiece of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, Egypt's largest underground organisation — had with one of the group's exiled leaders, Sheikh Abu Yasser Rifai Taha.

In three laconic sentences, he denied that Al-Gama'a was a member of the Islamic Front for Holy War against the Jews and Crusaders. That was all. But the importance of the message was emphasised by its appearance on the home page of the Al-Gama'a site, and not on the more usual location of a subsidiary page. Unusually too, it appeared on the Internet before being in print.

Diaa Rashwan, an Egyptian expert on the Islamist movement, found it a puzzling announcement. Because in February, and in Sheikh Taha's name, Al-Gama'a certainly had joined the six-member Front — along with another Egyptian organisation, Jihad, and the suspected Saudi sponsor of Islamic terrorism Osama Ben Laden — with the aim of killing Americans wherever it could. Why go back on that and seek so urgently to publicise it?

The answer soon came — in the mayhem of Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Through its link with the Front, Rashwan concluded, Al-Gama'a had got wind of an operation in which it wanted no part, and was determined the world should know it.

On the face of it, that was strange. The African bombings were, in appearance at least, the triumphant, spectacular debut of a new strategy to which Al-Gama'a and Jihad

had been steadily gravitating.

Although for both, the United States and Israel were mortal foes, in practice the waging of holy war against them never formed part of their strategy. Since their insurgency began in 1992, it had been directed against the enemy within, against "infidel" princes — like President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt — those "apostates from Islam, nourished at the table of colonialism, be it Crusader, Communist or Zionist".

Such a struggle, wrote the seminal thinker Abdul Salam Faraj, "has priority over the enemy abroad. We must concentrate on our own Islamic problem, on establishing God's law in our own countries".

The mission for Al-Gama'a and Jihad was to establish "the Islamic state" through violence. They confined their attacks to Egypt. Even foreign tourists were not targeted as "infidels," only as a means of undermining the "atheist" state.

Yet as the domestic struggle continued, they were thinking more and more about the "foreign" enemy. The shift first became apparent in their internal literature after the devastating suicide exploits of their Palestinian counterpart, Hamas.

"They were impressed," said Rashwan, "by the impact these had on Arab public opinion; this was not because they were Islamists, but because they were 'doing something' against the Zionist enemy while Arab governments did nothing. The arrival of Netanyahu, and U.S. complicity in all he did, only made U.S. targets more appealing."

But however spectacular, the attack on Nairobi should not be seen as a yardstick of the Islamists' growing strength — certainly not in their key Egyptian arena. Rather the opposite. The resort to foreign targets can equally be viewed as the result of failure at home. In a similar way, radical, left-wing

Palestinians had earlier taken to "foreign" operations such as hijackings and hostage-taking after they failed inside Israel/Palestine.

In fact, the decline of Al-Gama'a at home is easily measured, and followed its own misdeeds and inadequacies, as well as ferocious repression of it by the state. The neighbourhood good works that brought initial popularity are long past. Its fanatical puritanism steadily told against it. It reached its nadir of popular disapproval with the massacre of tourists in Luxor in November.

Luxor was the spectacular exception to the decreasing use by Al-Gama'a of military operations of all kinds. This year there have been only 14 attacks, in which 31 people — 13 Islamists, six police and 12 "civilians" — have died. Last year 193 died.

There must be compelling reasons why Sheikh Taha, one of the hawks in Al-Gama'a, dissociated his organisation from an operation which, in light of the new strategy, was so politically timely and theoretically appropriate.

They are to be found, Rashwan believes, in the reluctance of Al-Gama'a to open a "new front" against the U.S. when it is in such retreat at home. Unlike Jihad, Al-Gama'a has always been an above, as well as an underground, movement. It began life in the universities, with President Anwar Sadat's encouragement. Even when it became clandestine and violent, it persisted in Al-Da'wa, or Islamicisation on an Islamically "ignorant" society. Its road to power was through gradual destabilisation in which propaganda and violence had its role. But in its substantial, semi-public self, it is vulnerable to state repression.

Furthermore, Al-Gama'a seems to be groping towards a fundamental transforma-

tion of its attitude towards state and society, which is likely to portend a renunciation of the violence which has been its central imperative.

Last year its jailed "historic" chiefs called for a ceasefire, which has been gaining support ever since. They are said to be drawing up a "peaceful contract between the Islamist movement and society." Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam hardly square with such a radical change of heart.

Al-Gama'a's sometime ally, sometime rival, Jihad, has been affected by this moderating trend too. But less so. It was always more ideologically extreme and almost wholly military, lacking any public political presence.

Its original theory of action dispensed with gradualism — all-out, immediate violence against the "apostate" state and its instruments was to be the only way. In practice, Jihad has confined itself to a few, carefully prepared bombings against important state targets. Being very small and highly secretive, it can better protect itself against state or international reprisals.

There will probably be more attacks such as Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. The perpetrators have already invited such merciless retaliation that they have nothing to gain by retreat. The fact that Egypt's main Islamist underground movement, Al-Gama'a, has apparently resolved not to be a party to such action may be a sign of its weakness.

On the other hand, it should not be seen as more than a temporary, tactical success for the Egyptian state. Few Islamist experts doubt that, at bottom, religiously motivated violence is rooted in the Egyptian people's dismal living conditions. And these get worse year by year.

— The Guardian

Letters

'Jordanians should feel sorry about Haddadin's resignation'

To the editor:

I HAVE noted how much you and some of your reporters are obsessed with Munther Haddadin, a dignified, qualified and internationally recognised water expert and professional. You seem to echo the tabloids over and over expressing joy over his resignation when, in fact, Jordanians should feel sorry about it.

I am writing not in support of Haddadin because his domestic and international records speak for him. Rather I am writing in support of Jordan and all Jordanians. In your coverage of the "water crisis," you have been falling into the same pitfall time and again, and this has been causing, besides panic, a lot of economic losses and suffering.

You insist that our drinking water in West Amman contains worms and weeds, and you also insist that the water contains "body waste." This drives everyone to be scared stiff, and run for other supposedly safe water supplies. The result has been a rush on water tankers (some of which haul water from non-potable sources), undue supervision by police, Water Authority, Ministry of Supply and other personnel, an increase in the prices of bottled water, and an unpopular intervention

by the Ministry of Supply to import bottled water from Syria and Saudi Arabia to offset market distortion. This pitfall of yours is, I believe, a simple but grave mistake of re-translation from Arabic back into English of the English original terms; nematodes, algae and fecal coliform. You kept using the terms "worms," "weeds" and "body waste" to mean "nematodes," "algae" and "fecal coliforms" respectively. None of these original terms match or correspond to the terms you erroneously have been using in your reports. I understand that the Arabic translation of the original terms has been dubious, and your re-translation made the same mistake.

The above contaminants occur in all sources of surface water around the world. When surface water is used as a source of drinking water, treatment plants are built to purify the surface "raw" water and make the finished water after treatment potable meeting specified international standards. The treatment plants remove the algae, the nematodes and the fecal coliforms and disinfect the finished water with effective disinfectants. If treatment operations are not very careful, some taste and odour may result because of the contact of the disinfectant

with any remaining live algae.

The "raw" water from the King Abdullah Canal has in it the above and other contaminants, except that the nematodes are of the "free-living" type and are non-parasitic. This means they are harmless to humans even when they are alive. The Zai treatment plant was built to remove all contaminants, and to disinfect the finished water with sufficient doses of chlorine. The contaminants have been proven absent from the finished water of the Zai treatment plant. However, remains of dead microscopic nematodes of the free-living type were reported in the finished water at very low counts. These are not called nematodes because they have been transformed into organic matter by disinfectants. The same happens in all other organisms that lived in the "raw" water before treatment, including all remaining fecal coliforms, bacteria, viruses and the like. For your information, drinking water standards in the United States do not specify a lower count on the nematodes of the free-living type, even when they are alive in drinking water. In fact, they have been observed at the taps of consumers and fire hydrants in many American and Canadian cities. None have been observed in

Amman's drinking water.

My point is clear: the raw water drawn from the King Abdullah Canal in the Jordan Valley carries with it all kinds of contaminants before its treatment at the Zai plant; but the finished water the plant produces, pumped into the distribution networks of West Amman, has always been free of all of these contaminants. I hope your obsession with Munther Haddadin, which has led you and other papers into these pitfalls, will not blind your eyes from recognising these simple facts.

I have known the Jordan Times since its birth to be a responsible, sober and balanced daily. However, your coverage of this water crisis has been a strange exception that I hope will not transform into a norm. Your bias against the truth has been obvious as that expressed by some Arabic dailies and by several weekly tabloids.

A report in your sister paper, Al Ra'i, of today, August 16, informed us that the prime minister and the ministers visited the Zai treatment plant [Saturday] and talked to the Jordanian expert Murad Bino and the German expert that has arrived to help in the plant operation. Al Ra'i quoted the experts as saying that what has been happening in the plant

is not unusual nor it is in the realm of the unexpected, especially during periods of high temperatures. They assured that matters can be corrected by adjusting the doses of chemicals used in the treatment. Incidentally, similar opinions have lately been expressed by experts from the WHO, Stanley Consultants, and consultants from Camp, Dresser and McKee (CDM). Instead of promoting such facts, you opted, in your issue of the same day, to ignore the visit of the prime minister and the responsible opinions expressed; and to mislead the public by implying (to me, at least) that there are weeds and worms in our drinking water.

I was raised, and I raised my children, to be honest, truthful and fair. None of these qualities have been displayed in your coverage of the water crisis. Because I am a biased party, I do not want the readers to take my words for granted. I would like your readers to question the sensationalism displayed in your paper on such an important and sensitive issue and to demand accuracy, objectivity and responsibility. In the final analysis, only the truth shall prevail.

Lexi Munther Haddadin
Amman

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A look
in Saudi Arabia
Al Munajjed
Press Ltd. Lon-
113 pp.
Book Review
Even comes to the issue
in Saudi Arabia,
thing that comes to
the image of a veiled
woman. Naturally, this image
is a series of impres-
sions. The predominant con-
ception is that a veiled
woman must be oppressed,
a prisoner of her
and children, and
from the most vital
in rights such as the
to work and express
though the veil image is
questionable reality,
consequent impres-
sions must be reviewed thor-
oughly. In this book, Muna
Manajjed has taken Saudi
women to speak out for
themselves and assert their
rights about their lives
and operations. Al Munajjed
has done a study by inter-
viewing 100 Saudi women
from different economic and
social backgrounds. The
study provides a com-
prehensive image on the
position of women's role
in society and a thorough
explanation of their own
views on the most disputed
issues of their lives: segre-
gation, education, work and
marriage.
The discovery of oil
in Arabia lacked the
importance of its
neighbouring countries, and
Saudi Arabia was not prone to
develop.
Saudi Arabia introduced women's
rights and dismissed the
image of the veil as com-
ing at an early stage.
Saudi Arabia fiercely
the emancipation of
a slave to "Western-
isation." The discovery of oil,
brought along pros-
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ment.
The book explains how
the economic
and the country's social
structure and its drive to sus-
tain an Islamic state, and
all these elements

Muslims differ over whether clothes make the man

Only a tiny minority of the world's Muslims are Arabs, but Arab influence on the religion is powerful and pervasive because of Islam's North African origins. Now a growing fashion for Arabic words and dress in Malaysia has sparked debate over the difference between Arabisation and Islamisation.

By R. Mageswary

KUALA LUMPUR — When two Malay men meet, the fashion is for them to throw a smattering of Arabic words into the conversation to sound impressive.

Saya, the Malay word for I, may be replaced by ana, and awak (you) becomes ana.

The Arabic influence does not stop there. Both men may be attired in a flowing jubah (gown) and turban, and sport a long beard.

"From a distance they look like miniature Arabs. Up close they speak like pseudo-Arabs," says Amir Yusoff, a Malay scholar who argues that some Muslim Malays are being "Arabised."

Such behaviour, he

argues, reflects a tendency to connect Arabisation with Islamisation — the idea that in order to be seen to be Islamic, it is necessary to look Arabic.

Zainah Anwar of the organisation Sisters in Islam agrees.

"These people are beset with the colour, design and type of material used for their jubah, as they associate it with the Islamic way of dressing," she says.

The habit of donning what the wearer believes to be religiously sanctioned attire is noted in a recent book, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, by a prominent social commentator, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar. He points out that many of these men also grow beards as their way of emulating the Prophet and his compan-



A Malaysian father helps his son put on his sandals after exiting a mosque (file photo)

ions. Ethnic and religious issues are given considerable importance in Malaysia because of the population balance and popular perceptions that other groups may be faring better than one's own: There are 11.5 million Malays and indigenous peoples, 5.2 million Chinese and 1.5 million who originated from the Indian subcontinent.

Muslim Malays hold political power and followers of other religions are wary of signs of Muslim militancy.

Pointing to the benefits of adopting a clothing style associated with religious Arabs, Dr. Abu Bakar Abdul Majeed, senior fellow in Malaysia's Institute of Islamic Understanding, says that the wearing of a jubah and turban imposes certain rules and regulations on the individuals concerned by encouraging them to act up to the image portrayed.

"They would have to be more subdued and well-behaved and not loiter in the shopping centres or video arcades," he says.

"That is one way of saying that those who dress in jubah and wear turbans are good or better Muslims," retorts Zainah Anwar. "This is a wrong percep-

tion as a person's faith should not be questioned by his manner of dressing."

Some pundits support freedom of expression but worry about the loss of Malay culture.

"We borrow and adapt too easily and have problems maintaining our identity," says cultural commentator Azah Aziz. "There is no need to borrow, as the Malay culture is beautiful and has stood the test of time. What I see now is the bastardisation of the Malay culture."

Amir Yusoff agrees. He suggests the fashion stems from a confusion over the

link between culture and religion. "We can follow our Malay culture and still be religious," he argues.

He, too, is concerned about the danger that the Malays might lose their distinct cultural identity.

"I believe that we must not adopt wholesale what has been practised in the Arab World without balancing it with the general principles taught in the Koran," he says.

But Ahmad Azam of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia dismisses the notion of growing Arab influence: "In any religion, you have the extremists and mainstream people.

Those in the mainstream category reflect their religiosity by good deeds and behaviour, while the extremists put the emphasis on their outward appearance."

Adopting Arab cultural practices, he says, is simply a different way of expressing oneself: "It is nonsense to say that they are following the Arabic culture."

Dr. Sumit K. Mandal of the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies suggests that although a form of "Arabisation" might be involved, the word is misleading.

"Merely saying that don-

ning a jubah is Arabisation or Islamisation amounts to developing an unthinking approach to a religion that has a complex and rich history. It could also lead to developments that encourage intolerance and curtail intellectual experience and exploration," he says.

"The Malays living here are interpreting the use of these items within a local context. They are absorbing and accepting Arabic items like the jubah and turban and interpreting it locally."

They were learning about a civilisation and culture constructed in the

Arabic language and spread over a dozen countries, says Mandal.

He also notes that it is not uncommon to see Malaysians taking on all kinds of affectations, often European, from fashion accessories to the names they give their homes — such as Rosa Pasadena or Tivoli Villas.

The writer works for The Sun in Malaysia and is also a human rights worker.

— Gemini News

A look at Saudi Arabian women in their own words

Women in Saudi Arabia Today
By Mona Al Munajjed
MacMillan Press Ltd. London 153 pp.

Book Review

WHEN IT comes to the issue of women in Saudi Arabia, the first thing that comes to mind is the image of a veiled woman. Naturally, this image entails a series of impressions; the predominant conviction is that a veiled woman must be oppressed, uneducated, a prisoner of her husband and children, and stripped from the most vital human rights such as the freedom to work and express herself.

Although the veil image is an unquestionable reality, several consequent impressions must be reviewed thoroughly. In this book, Mona Al Munajjed had Saudi women to speak out for themselves and assert their own views about their lives and aspirations. Al Munajjed conducted a study by interviewing 100 Saudi women from different economic and educational backgrounds. This study provides a comprehensive image on the development of women's role in society and a thorough explanation of their own views on the most disputed aspects of their lives; segregation, education, work and the veil.

Before the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia lacked the strategic importance of its neighbouring countries, and therefore was not prone to exposure and development. Countries like Kuwait and Bahrain introduced women's education and dismissed the wearing of the veil as compulsory at an early stage, while Saudi Arabia fiercely fought the emancipation of society in fear that it would become a slave to "Westernisation." The discovery of oil, however, brought along prosperity and rapid development.

This book explains how development and the demands of the economic structure sometimes contradict with the country's social barriers and its drive to sustain a strict Islamic state, and how all these elements

encourage the liberation of women in some aspects, yet hinder it in others.

Despite the discrepancy in their views, the majority of the interviewees shared one, indisputable belief: that "Islam is the binding force of the collective conscience" p. 103. Therefore, their demands for development remain within the boundaries of Islamic teachings, and all forms of emancipation must serve the nation's quest for preserving an Islamic society.

Furthermore, the main objective behind any rules and regulations pertaining to women is preserving their chastity and maintaining the family's honour. Hence, any form of liberation regarding their right to education and work is often hindered by fear that it might generate demands for further liberation.

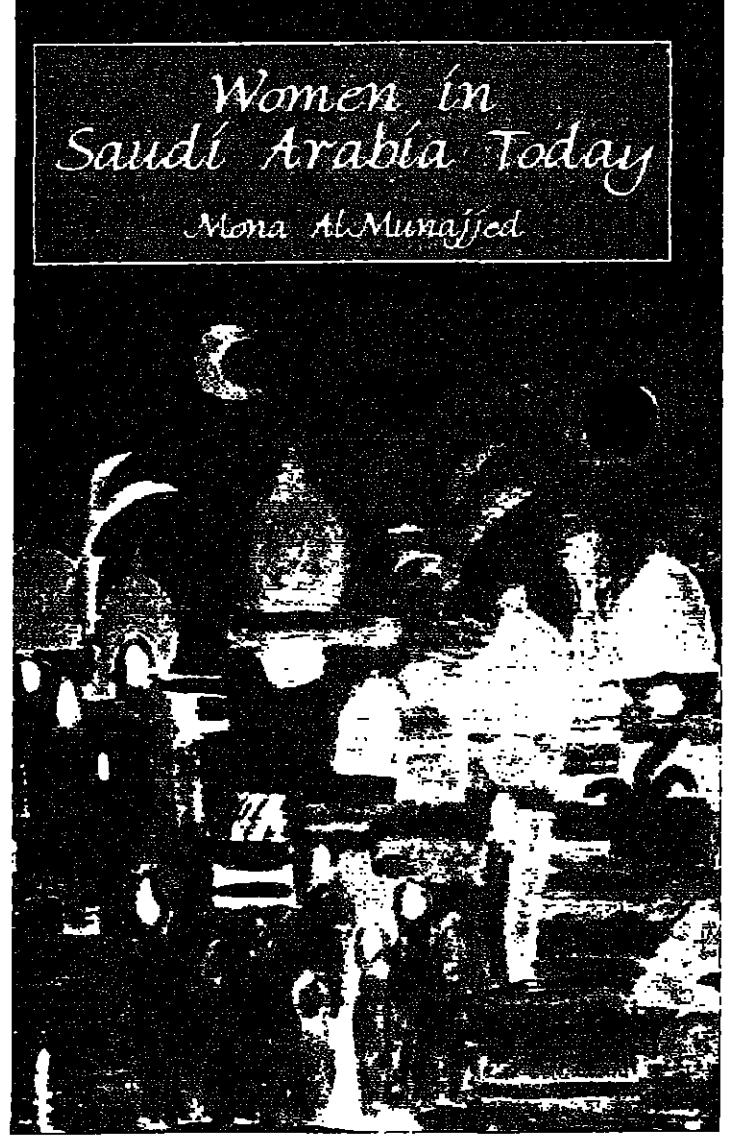
The majority of the interviewees did not consider this reality to be negative, but rather an indispensable characteristic of their culture. A woman who explained her view of the veil best described this by saying: "I don't just wear the veil... I was born in it, and I grew up with it" p. 47.

Similarly, the educational policy is aimed at preparing girls to commence their roles as future wives and mothers.

At universities, women are still not allowed to do majors such as engineering, architecture and pharmacy. And despite the rising numbers of educated women, Saudi Arabia still hosts over 4 million foreign labourers since women are not allowed to work in mixed environments.

Despite the fact that most women are frustrated because they cannot utilise their academic achievement in paid employment, 60 per cent of the interviewees shuddered at the notion of having to work with men.

Women are strongly in favour of segregation, but only a few of them related their attitude to religion. In Saudi Arabia, the concept of friendship between the sexes does not exist. Women remain a part of "the private world" and are never exposed to strange men in any way, thus leaving them with minimal experience on how to deal with the other sex,



which brings along strong sentiments of mistrust and fear. A 23-year-old woman, holder of a BA in business emphasised this by saying: "It is just the idea of being with them that frightens me... They scare me. I do not trust them and I don't like to deal with them at all" p. 45.

Although this book exposes a series of contradictions, Al Munajjed does not aim to question those women or falsify their views. On the contrary, she clearly asserts at the beginning of this book that as a member of this society, she can understand the influence of "cultural, traditional and patriarchal values on their status" p. 7. But she attempted, still, to examine whether such beliefs actually sprung from the teachings of Islam — especially regarding segregation and the veil. She cites various verses of the Koran in order to explain that some values, which were

Islam returns to Spain after 500 years

By Sinikka Tarvainen

MADRID — More than 500 years after the end of Muslim rule in Spain, Islam is returning to the country once known as Al Andalus.

The number of Muslims has doubled and more than 100 new mosques have been opened in just eight years, and 25 new Islamic associations were registered in 1997 alone, according to figures quoted by the daily El Mundo.

Spain officially counts around 300,000 Muslims, but some estimates put the number at up to half a million.

There are now mosques in all of Spain's 17 autonomous regions, the total number being around 200, according to El Mundo.

Around 100 Islamic associations have been officially registered, but the real number could be twice that many, officials said.

The Andalusian city of Granada, the last bastion of Muslim Spain to fall to the Christian reconquest in 1492, is again becoming a centre for Islam.

Home to around 2,000 Muslims, the city again has streets with a distinctly Islamic atmosphere. Muslim businesses from perfume shops to furniture factories are proliferating, women wear headscarves and bearded men walk the streets, and the Muslims even coin their own money.

Around 3,000-5,000 Spaniards are estimated to have converted to Islam, but the biggest growth factor is immigration from North Africa. Islam will keep growing due to immigration," said Joaquin Mantecon, a government expert on Islam.

But Riay Tatary, president of the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain, warns against exaggerating the phenomenon. "Many North Africans are only passing through Spain," he pointed out in an interview.

Those who do stay, however, feel at home in many ways. "They find an Islamic cultural and artistic legacy. Even the Spanish language has around 4,000 words of Arab origin," Mantecon said.

The return of mosques to places like Granada brings echoes from the past when Berber and Arab conquerors crossed over to Spain from northern Africa from the 8th century onwards, and ruled large parts of the country for centuries.

Moorish Spain was a beacon of science and high culture in medieval Europe, and Spain still boasts some of the world's foremost historic Islamic sites, such as the Alhambra palace-fortress in Granada and the huge mosque and Medina Aza-hara palace in Cordoba.

Spain has the Moorish period to thank for some of its most distinctive traits, such as elements in flamenco music and architectural and pottery styles, or even the word "Allah."

The Muslim revival in Granada has its roots already in the 19th and early 20th centuries when writers such as Federico Garcia Lorca and Blas Infante began pointing out the richness of Spain's lost Islamic heritage.

Many of the Spaniards who now convert to Islam are former left-wing militants or hippies, press reports said.

"Every convert has his or her reasons," Tatary said, "but the conversions also reflect a search

for spiritual values in a materialistic society."

"Islam is a comprehensible religion, very accessible to the common man," said Pedro Martinez, a Spanish expert on Islam.

The growth of Islam through immigration and conversions is being boosted by financial support from countries including Libya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Malaysia, according to press reports.

Some of the Granada Muslims are now even demanding to get back the ancient privileges granted to them 500 years ago, such as their own justice system. "They are not representative of Spanish Muslims," Tatary stresses.

The official representatives of Spain's Islamic community try to fight prejudice which brands all Muslims as fundamentalists. "We want to be part of this society and of a common project for Spain and Europe," Tatary says.

Spanish Muslims still suffer from lack of cemeteries and schools, but Tatary says the problems are being solved. "Muslims have rapidly been gaining more rights, and their situation is better than in many other European countries," he notes.

The Spanish Muslim community is believed to be one of the fastest growing in western Europe which has an estimated 12 million Muslims, with France (4 million) and Germany (2.5 million) topping the list.

"In the future, some of the large European cities may well have Muslim mayors," Martinez said.

— Deutsche Presse-Agentur

King empowers Regent to change government

(Continued from page 1)

which could have resulted in disasters.

But analysts have added that Majali's 23-member team found itself at odds with Parliament in trying to explain significant discrepancies between growth rate estimates and actual figures worked out by the Department of Statistics — a development dubbed by the local press as "the growth rate fiasco."

The figures unveiled during a World Bank team's visit showed a growth rate of 0.8 and 2.7 per cent for 1996 and 1997, respectively, while government estimates had previously placed economic growth at 5.2 and five per cent.

on public freedoms, but the last six weeks have witnessed unusually direct calls for its resignation.

In early July, the government found itself at odds with Parliament in trying to explain significant discrepancies between growth rate estimates and actual figures worked out by the Department of Statistics — a development dubbed by the local press as "the growth rate fiasco."

The figures unveiled during a World Bank team's visit showed a growth rate of 0.8 and 2.7 per cent for 1996 and 1997, respectively, while government estimates had previously placed economic growth at 5.2 and five per cent.

The London-based Economist suggested that "the committee responsible for the [growth rate] figures was either deliberately over-optimistic in an attempt to boost the economy — or just plain incompetent."

While earlier this year an international human rights watch-dog had enlisted Majali among the world's top ten enemies of the press, the endorsement by Parliament last week of the government's controversial press and publications bill enraged journalists.

They said amendments introduced by the Lower House of Parliament fell short of changing the "draconian" nature of the government's draft.

Minister of finance sees no reason to consider lowering bread prices

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite the drop in the prices of grains in world markets, Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez does not see any justification for Jordan to review the bread prices which were hiked in 1996 upon instructions from international monetary institutions.

The minister, who was responding to demands by the Consumer Protection Society (CPS) to reconsider bread prices in the Kingdom, said it was not wise to reduce the prices while keeping the bread subsidy given to needy families.

A recent study by the CPS recommended that the price of bread, currently being sold at 200 fils per kilogramme, be reduced to

between 120 fils and 140 fils. "This price will be profitable to the government," the CPS said.

The study said that the current price of wheat in world markets range between \$125 and \$140 per tonne down from more than \$240 in 1997.

The study pointed out that 97.7 per cent of those polled in the study said current bread prices in the country are "unsuitable" and prefer that they be reviewed following the reduction of wheat prices by almost half in the international markets.

CPS Chairman Mohammad Obeidat said the Kingdom's reserves of wheat are now sufficient for six months following a new shipment that arrived in the country at a rate of \$135 per

tonne. "The hike of bread prices in the past caused a widespread rise in the prices of most basic commodities," Obeidat said noting that that has weakened the purchasing power of the people.

He indicated that the government will profit about JD24 million this year as a result of the reduction in the international prices of wheat. The finance minister said the Cabinet did not discuss the reduction of bread prices during its weekly session on Saturday. "It is premature to raise this subject," he added.

"Nobody knows when such a matter will be discussed but as far as my ministry is concerned, we are not thinking in any reduction of bread prices,"

Hafez told the Jordan Times.

"It is unwise to reduce the bread prices while we continue giving the bread subsidies to the people," the minister stressed.

He noted that the ministry will distribute the cash subsidies to the concerned citizens as early as the beginning of next month.

The government decision to lift the subsidies on bread prices caused widespread riots and several days of unrest in the southern governorates of Ma'an, Karak and Tafila in 1996.

The decision was in line with the economic restructuring programme that Jordan reached with international monetary institutions in the early 90's.

Foreign help in Kuwait oil sector seen a must

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's oil minister has said the Gulf state will open its oil sector to foreign participation by the year's end despite the failure to do so on two previous occasions.

But Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah reiterated that ongoing talks with large foreign oil companies did not include production sharing agreements as the country's constitution banned it.

"We must grant them a role and make them participate in operations," Saud told Reuters but he stressed the talks were centering around "operating service agreements."

"We have had extensive discussions (with the majors) and will respond to their proposals by September or October and finalise the concept," he said.

International hopes for a role in Kuwait's upstream operations, including oil fields close to the northern border with former occupier Iraq, were renewed last year when the Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC) gave approval in principle to foreign participation.

The SPC is the highest oil policy decision making body in the country where the production of a barrel of oil costs slightly less than \$1. At current production levels of around 2.0 million barrels daily, Kuwait's oil reserves would last more than 100 years.

When asked if this time, Kuwait, which controls almost 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves, would grant foreign firms a role although the SPC had twice before — in 1993 and 1995 — given a similar approval, Saud said: "By the end of this year we will have concluded everything. God willing...The minute we have an agreement we will go ahead."

Some of the world's largest oil firms have been waiting in the wings for years with small technical agreements with Kuwait, waiting for the day the country opens its lucrative upstream operations.

The minister said world majors "are stepping over each other to enter Kuwait and we welcome them with our conditions" which experts said work around constitutional limitations.

REUTERS • REUTERS • The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8010	0.6191	1.6069	146.25	1.5165	1776.60	2.0310	6.3370
DE Mark	0.5552	-	0.3429	0.8367	81.19	0.8418	986.12	1.1276	3.3820
GB Sterling	1.5178	2.9145	-	2.4379	236.66	2.4534	2874.02	3.2858	9.7667
CH Franc	0.6636	1.1944	0.4097	-	97.01	1.0189	1176.71	134.69	4.0036
JP Yen	0.0068	1.2310	0.4222	1.0300	-	1.0366	12.14	138.82	4.1285
CA Dollar	0.6594	1.2916	0.4225	1.0556	1.04	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3285
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0136	0.3477	0.8848	1216.10	0.8835	-	11.43	3.3977
NL Guilder	0.4924	88.65	0.3041	74.20	71.96	0.7465	874.48	-	2.9717
FR Franc	0.1855	0.2982	0.1023	24.9507	24.20	0.2511	33.63	33.6300	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7507	0.3770	3.6400	0.3073	3.6725	1618.00	3.4220
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2901	0.5317	5.1340	0.4334	5.1798	2141.04	4.8285
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0819	0.98	404.72	0.9124
Bahrain Dinar	2.86	1.8606	9.9488	-	9.66	0.8151	9.74	4026.53	9.0769
Catar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0844	1.01	417.03	0.9401
Kuwait Dinar	3.2541	2.3072	12.2093	1.2268	11.85	-	11.95	4939.80	0.9401
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0213	1.0127	0.9912	0.0857	-	413.34	0.9318
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4671	2.4708	0.2484	2.3979	0.2024	2.4193	-	2.2543
Egyptian	0.2822	0.2072	1.0951	0.1102	1.0637	0.0898	1.0732	443.60	-

Energy									
Oils	Last	review							
Brent	0.00	0.00							
W. Texas	13.37	13.41							
Bonny	0.00	0.00							
Dubai	12.53	11.59							
UL Gas	133.00	132.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	283.85	284.35							
Silver (oz's)	5.16	5.18							
Platinum (oz's)	370	372							
AL (3 Months)	1327	1329							
CU (3 Months)	1625	1630							
Zinc (3 Months)	1041	1042							
Lead (3 Months)	650	653							
Ni (3 Months)	4145	4165							

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	Chng	High	Low	P/C		
New York	DOW JONES	8425	-34.5	-0.41	8558.57	8380.72	8458.5		
New York	S&P 500	1062.76	-12.16	-1.13	1083.92	1057.22	1074.91		
London	FT-SE 100	5455	55.5	1.03	5517.8	5434.9	5395.5		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15123.93	-258.09	-1.68	15355.1	15048.5	15382		
Paris	CAC 40	3994.91	43.22	1.09	4024.27	3973.11	3961.89		
Frankfurt	DAX	5447.9	91.67	1.71	5483.16	5355.4	5366.23		

Energy									
Commodity	Last	Delivery							
Coffee (c/lbs)	117.58	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1863	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	261.4	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	98	Spot							
Soya (c/lbs)	23.98	Spot							
Tea (c/lbs)	125	Spot							
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	415	Spot							

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell							
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1447	1.1504							
DE Mark	0.3925	0.3946							
CH Franc	0.4689	0.4712							
FR Franc	0.1171	0.1177							
JP Yen	0.8336	0.836							
NL Guilder	0.3482	0.3491							
IT Lira	0.3981	0.4008							

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AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CERTIFICATES - SHORT TERM											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 16/08/1998											
PART	12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE		
3	355.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	19.3	0.85	100	2170	511.140	234.00	235.50 1.50+	
	2.100	1.620	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	13.4	4.24	6	6337	10455	1.65	-	
	3.230	1.130	BANK OF JORDAN	0	0.00	3	750	865	1.16	-	
	1.300	0.870	HID-EAST INV. BK.	67.0	0.00	4	10650	10762	1.00	0.02 -02+	
	6.510	2.610	THE HOUSING BK.	20.0	3.17	11	9450	29768	3.14	3.15 0.01+	
	3.450	1.790	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	9	0.00	5	399	365	1.84	1.85 0.01+	
	0.870	0.580	JOR. GULF BANK	9	0.00	1	300	300	0.62	0.60 -02+	
	4.000	1.690	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.1	0.00	25	3522	6151	1.75	1.77 0.02+	
	3.900	1.350	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	23.7	3.25	1	1000	1540	1.54	1.54 -	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
	INDEX:	308.04	INDEX:	308.04	INDEX:	308.04	INDEX:	308.04	INDEX:	308.04	
	3.100	2.700	JORDAN INSURANCE	12.7	5.08	1	250	738	3.10	2.95 -15-	
	4.000	1.450	JERUSALEM INSUR.	9.8	5.52	4	25540	37033	1.45	1.46 -01+	
	2.850	1.640	JOR. FIDELITY INSUR.	7.5	9.29	9	4044	10895	2.68	2.69 0.01+	
	2.210	1.080	BOLY LAND INSUR.	8.2	0.00	2	2952	3247	1.10	1.10 -	
	2.610	1.630	NATL. ABILA INSUR.	29.4	0.00	1	400	660	1.70	1.65 -05-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
	INDEX:	127.13	INDEX:	127.13	INDEX:	127.13	INDEX:	127.13	INDEX:	127.13	
	2.240	1.470	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.9	5.39	23	42097	64820	1.54	1.53 -01-	
	1.500	1.000	KATL. PORTFOLIO	35.9	0.00	7	6100	5522	0.91	0.90 -01-	
	1.120	0.780	REAL ESTATE INV.	15.1	0.00	1	500	385	0.79	0.77 -02-	
	9.500	5.100	ALBA I	8.7	7.02	1	350	1995	5.75	5.70 -05-	
	4.600	1.880	ADAM INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.0	1.08	11	8774	10819	2.78	2.01 2.02 -01+	
	1.070	0.580	ADAM EDUCATION	21.4	0.00	1	100	93	0.94	0.93 -01-	
	1.830	1.200	UNIFIED CO.	5.4	0.09	2	600	731	1.23	1.21 -02-	
	1.350	0.750	UNITED FOR FINAN. INV.	1.4	0.59	4	3258	3673	1.08	1.13 -05+	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
	INDEX:	111.30	INDEX:	111.30	INDEX:	111.30	INDEX:	111.30	INDEX:	111.30	
	4.000	1.840	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	11.9	5.90	16	59413	118945	2.00	2.00 -	
	4.110	1.690	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	18.0	0.00	2	700	1190	1.70	1.70 -	
	11.250	5.260	JOR. PETROL. REFINARY	10.1	8.35	3	1120	11926	10.65	10.65 -	
	5.950	4.450	JORDAN TANNING	8.0	6.26	2	490	1302	4.90	5.00 -10+	
	1.820	1.060	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	63.8	0.00	2	600	648	1.07	1.08 0.01+	
	5.740	2.300	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	7.8	2.64	138	81349	231568	2.79	2.84 0.05+	
	5.800	1.230	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	5.1	8.47	1	100	318	1.24	1.18 -06-	
	1.440	1.020	JUL. PAPER MANFCT.	2.0	0.41	8	3774	3074	1.10	1.11 0.01+	
	6.350	4.700	DAR ALADWA IDV. DIV.	7.0	6.02	8	7550	8997	5.81	5.81 -	
	2.980	1.730	ARAB ALUM. IND.	13.5	13.66	3	1050	1932	1.85	1.83 -02-	
	1.500	1.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	18.0	0.00	18	31340	12833	1.42	1.41 -01-	
	1.100	0.670	ARAB PAPER CORP. LTD.	22.8	0.00	80	600	624	0.80	0.78 -02-	
	0.620	0.410	NATIONAL LINES	9	0.00	2	450	185	0.41	0.41 -	
	0.590	0.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	2	1000	370	0.38	0.37 -01-	
	1.760	0.800	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	10.0	0.00	8	1037	800	0.80	0.80 -	
	2.100	0.790	KATL. CABLE WIRE. MPAC	35.6	0.00	9	11200	8702	0.80	0.76 -04-	
	0.730	0.460	JOR. SIV PRO-CEM.	8.5	0.00	28	31580	13980	0.46	0.45 0.01+	
	1.470	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	14.3	4.62	9	3080	3965	1.30	1.30 -	
	0.390	0.240	KATL. INDUST.	10.0	0.00	8	5219	5219	0.24	0.26 -06-	
	1.040	0.500	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9	0.00	10	4000	2120	0.53	0.53 -	
	1.080	0.690	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	9.7	14.49	8	2500	1725	0.69	0.69 -	
	1.610	1.150	EL-KHAYMA NEAR	6.0	0.00	13	22210	25761	1.15	1.16 -	
	3.130	0.970	INTL. TOBACCO	9.6	5.95	70	486	700	0.98	0.98 -	
	3.120	0.860	UNION CAS. & VEG.	9.6	0.00	1	500	435	0.88	0.87 -01-	
	0.890	0.650	JORDAN STEEL	9.4	8.33	8	1431	1201	0.84	0.84 -	
	0.670	0.550	HID-EAST COMPLEX	10.3	0.00	3	3000	1710	0.57	0.57 -	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
	INDEX:	89.19	INDEX:	89.19	INDEX:	89.19	INDEX:	89.19	INDEX:	89.19	
	GRAND TOTAL	INDEX:	187.66	INDEX:	187.66	INDEX:	187.66	INDEX:	187.66	INDEX:	187.66
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 16/08/1998											
	W 1.050	0.880	EXPORT & FIB. BUK. 75%	16.7	0.00	1	500	325	0.90	0.90 -	
	1.000	1.000	ARAB CEMENT IND. CO.	E	0.00	1	10000	10000	1.00	1.00 -	
	0.500	0.340	JOR. TRADE PAC.	9	0.00	1	2000	860	0.43	0.43 -02-	
	0.520	0.700	ARAB FIB. INVEST.	42.0	0.00	1	11037	11037	0.70	0.68 -01-	
	1.010	0.790	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	P	0.00	1	1000	950	1.00	0.95 -05-	
	W 2.220	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	9	0.00	3	2100	2730	1.28	1.30 0.02+	
	0.600	0.400	ARAB FOOD & MED.	1	0.00	1	400	132	0.34	0.33 0.01+	
	0.430	0.240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	28.8	0.00	5	3000	750	0.28	0.28 -	
	0.450	0.230	KATL. TEXTILE	P	0.00	2	1250	300	0.23	0.24 0.01+	

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Fanek sees stability of the dinar exchange rate continuing for many years

** ACCORDING TO Faded Fanek, the well-known columnist and analyst, the recent rush by some people to buy dollars from the markets did not and will not affect the standing of the Jordanian dinar. He said in a lecture that the total amount of dollars bought during last July did not exceed \$150 million whereas the Central Bank's reserves amount to \$1.5 billion.

Fanek praised the response of the Central Bank at the start of the rush when it pumped additional amounts in the markets and announced its readiness to provide whatever amounts needed in the local market. He expressed extreme optimism that the stability of the dinar exchange rate will continue for many years to come.

Issam Salfit, the general manager of the Union Bank for Saving and Investment, commented on the steps taken by the Central Bank to influence a rise in interest rates by underlining two main reasons. The first to encourage the public to hold on to the dinar which carries a rewarding interest rate compared to any other currency. Secondly, to maintain the value and the exchange rate of the dinar intact. Salfit supported the Central Bank in signalling higher interest rates hinting at the same time that there is no logical economic conditions to influence the public into switching their dinars into dollars. "I expect everyone who changed currency to realise that his/her decision was wrong and switch back to dinar as quickly as possible," Salfit said.

Mufleh Aqel, executive director at the Arab Bank, said the Central Bank raised the interest rates on the certificates of deposits, discount rate and repurchase agreements as a result of the unjustified demand for dollars during the past three weeks. He

explained that central banks resort to this traditional measure whenever demand for foreign currencies rises. Such a measure aims at maintaining a higher return on the dinar to make it a more attractive saving instrument than other currencies, Aqel said.

He indicated that higher interest rates would raise borrowing costs and result in lower demand for credit facilities in addition to negative effects on the companies that have high indebtedness. "But, we should take into consideration the stability of the exchange rate which is an absolute priority in the monetary policy," he stressed expressing his backing for higher rates as it is needed for such stability.

Mohammad Al Qasem, the general manager of the Bank of Jordan, described the Central Bank's measures as a step in the right direction but he did not expect that interest rates will rise on loans. "Interest on credits will not change in the short and medium term as the Central Bank's measures are emergency steps to absorb the cash liquidity and maintain the attractiveness of the dinar through a high return."

Walid Al Sous, general manager of the Middle East Investment Bank, saw all the factors that emerged during the unjustified demand for dollars receding but he expected interest rates on deposits and loans to go in the short term.

Hani Saudi, a moneychanger, described the measures of pushing up interest rates as wrong and damaging to the national economy. He saw the measures as encouraging banks to maintain high interest rates and wide profit margins. "High interest deepens recession and protecting the dinar should not be at the expense of deepening the recession," he said (Al Dustour).

Final details for APC-Kemira joint project likely to be finalised by end of this year

AMMAN (J.T.) — A senior official of a multinational chemicals firm Saturday said that final details on a joint venture with the Arab Potash Company (APC) to produce potassium nitrate and dicalcium phosphate could be finalised by the end of this year.

"If all goes well, we aim to finalise the details by the end of 1998, and after that, the timetable indicates that we should start production by 2001," said Bjarne Christensen, vice president of Kemira Agro Oy.

APC and Kemira plan to construct a plant for the production of 150,000 tonnes of potassium nitrate for horticultural use and 75,000 tonnes of [animal] feed grade dicalcium phosphate, and will employ Danish technology. Christensen said the location of the plant depends upon the final project analysis, but both Safi, where the APC houses is carnallite extraction facilities, and Aqaba are candidates.

The APC in April signed a memorandum of understanding with Kemira Agro Oy during His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Copenhagen last spring. Christensen said the total investment in the project will be \$75 million for the 50-50 joint venture with Jordan's flagship mining industry. The venture expects to realise a \$150 million annual turnover and employ 120-130 people.

Christensen told the Jordan Times that production of the joint venture will be sold under Kemira labels. Kemira Agro is a global leader in agricultural chemical production, and its products are sold in virtually all world markets.

The government-owned APC since early this decade has been aggressively pursuing plans to diversify its product range and establish other products based on minerals extracted from the Dead Sea to meet global market changes.

In 1994, it created a subsidiary holding company to attract investments for the Jordan Safi Salt Company responsible for producing industrial salt, high grade table salt and salt tablets. A second subsidiary, the Jordan Dead Sea Industries Company (JODICO) will eventually produce top grade magnesium oxide and

hydroxide at the Dead Sea shores. Another APC subsidiary entered into Dead Sea cosmetic products manufacturing last year.

However, increased activity has not yet poured higher profits into APC coffers.

The company announced this week in its annual report to the Financial Securities Commission that its JD6.2 million profit in the first six months of this year were down 21 per cent from the profit in the same period for

1997.

The company sold 580,000 tonnes of potash in the first six months of this year, a 12 per cent drop from last year. The report said that revenues, which stood at JD44.2 million, had dropped 5.4 per cent from last year.

The report cited an increase in the cost of wages and maintenance costs for the removal of salt residues at the Dead Sea.

A knowledgeable industry source told the Jordan Times Saturday that the APC last year

gave a 15-month salary to employees and purchased vehicles for upper management.

He attributed the bulk of the drop in profits to "technical difficulties" at the Dead Sea.

"For several years, the APC has not taken the proper steps to clean up the environment in which they extract the salt," the source said.

"The result is an accumulation of salt 'mushrooms' to such an extent that the equipment could not produce enough carnallite to meet demand."

"This has been going on for years, and management always considers that the cost of cleaning up these mushrooms is 'too high' without any consideration for its future impact on profits," the source added.

"At one point production was stopped, and as far as I know, there is still no real plan to solve this problem — we continue to 'work around' it."

QATAR CENTRAL BANK ECONOMIC EXPERT

Applications are invited from outstanding candidates for the position of "Economic Expert" with The Economic Policy Department of Qatar Central Bank which is the monetary authority of the State of Qatar.

The role of "Economic Expert" is to contribute to the continuous studying, analysing and formulating monetary and banking policy of Qatar. The expert should have considerable working experience, preferably in a banking environment, in monetary policy analysis, monetary economics and central banking.

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An attractive remuneration package includes a competitive tax-free salary and other normal expatriate benefits. The salary level will depend on the working experience of the candidate.

The interview will be conducted in Amman, Jordan, between September 4 and 8, 1998. The short-listed candidates will be informed in due course. The candidates need to make themselves available in Amman for the interview.

To apply, please send your full CV, copies of educational certificates and a few publications, within 20 days from the publication of this advertisement quoting reference: econ. expert-98 to:

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 1998

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Bahrain Q1 offshore banking assets at \$71.4 billion

MANAMA (R) — Assets of offshore banking units (OBUs) operating in Bahrain dropped to \$71.4 billion in the first quarter of 1998 from \$72.05 billion three months earlier, the Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA) said.

A BMA quarterly bulletin said the assets were, however, higher than \$68.80 billion reported in the first quarter of 1997.

The BMA, Bahrain's central bank, did not give the number of OBUs operating in the island, but it said last year there were around 46.

Assets of 19 commercial banks rose slightly to 3.144 billion dinars (\$8.34 billion) at end-March 1998 from 3.133 billion dinars at end-December 1997 and 2.719 billion in the first quarter of 1997.

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World No. 1 Martina Hingis

Hingis and Davenport advance to WTA final

MANHATTAN BEACH (AFP) — World No. 1 Martina Hingis has reached a WTA final for the first time in three months, beating Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-4, 6-4, here Saturday.

The Swiss sensation seeks her fifth title of the year and first since winning the Italian Open in early May when she faces Lindsay Davenport here Sunday for the \$79,000 top prize at the \$450,000 event.

Hingis, 17, is trying to reach peak form for her U.S. Open title defense that begins August 31. The Australian Open champion seeks a 19th career singles crown and to boost her ratings lead on number two Davenport, who ousted fellow American

and fourth seed Monica Seles 6-4, 6-2.

French Open champion Sanchez Vicario, the third seed, fell to 1-7 against Hingis.

She was competing in her first tournament since losing to Hingis in the quarterfinals at Wimbledon.

Davenport seeks her fourth title of the year and second in as many weeks after claiming the crown at San Diego last Sunday. Davenport rose to 3-1 lifetime against Seles, whom she also beat in last week's semi-finals.

Matthaus looks to Champions League to complete jigsaw

BONN (AFP) — Ageing German great Lothar Matthaus, all but retired from international football, says European Champions League glory is the one jigsaw piece still missing in his near-perfect career.

The German, who made a fairytale comeback to German colours in this year's World Cup, said Saturday: "That's my dream. It's the one missing from my long, long career and I think it would fit in quite nicely."

Matthaus, aged 37, said he had not officially retired from international football and stressed he would remain on standby for Germany, if coach Bert Vogts needed him. But the sweeper added: "There are so many good players though I don't expect it will come to that."

The German Football Federation has said it will give him a send-off game. Vogts is currently assembling a side for Germany's first post-World Cup friendly, against Malta on September 2. Matthaus captained Germany to the world title in 1990. He only made the team during the 1998 World Cup — his fifth world tournament — after first-choice Matthias Sammer was ruled out with injury.

Beckham scores last gasp equaliser

LONDON (AFP) — England midfielder David Beckham silenced the boo-boys by striking a last gasp equaliser as Manchester United came from two goals down to snatch a 2-2 draw against Leicester on Saturday.

Beckham, who was jeered by the visiting supporters every time he touched the ball, curled in a 25-yard free kick three minutes into stoppage time to save United from an embarrassing home defeat on the opening day of the English Premiership season.

Beckham has been the subject of a hate campaign since he was sent off against Argentina in the World Cup with many fans blaming him for England's exit.

But the 23-year-old, who signed a new five-year contract with the Old Trafford club on Friday, responded to the taunts with an inspirational display, setting up United's first in the 79th minute for Teddy Sheringham before sealing a dramatic draw at the death.

United, bidding to bring back the title they won for four years out of five before Arsenal's triumph last season, were hopelessly off form early on and Leicester took full advantage to take a 2-0 lead through Emile Heskey and Tony Cottee.

Beckham's heroics left Leicester boss Martin O'Neill in a sombre mood.

"I'm very disappointed," said O'Neill. "To be 2-0 up at Old Trafford on the opening day of the season and despite Manchester United having the majority of the possession in the second half, overall I thought we had the better chances in the game."

"In the dressing room it's very sombre — we were close to winning but it hasn't happened although at least we are off the mark."

United manager Alex Ferguson admitted his side had been lucky.

"I think it was a good result for us although whether we deserved a draw or not is debatable," he said. "It took us 30 minutes to get going but they defended absolutely fantastically."

Elsewhere, Chelsea, parading £12 million (\$20 million) of new foreign talent, crashed 2-1 at Coventry, who stormed into a two-goal lead inside 15 minutes with goals from Dion Dublin and Darren Huckerby.

Italian international Pierluigi Casiraghi, World Cup winner Marcel Desailly and Albert Ferrer were all included in the starting line-up, though there was no place for Brian Laudrup, who was ruled out with a back injury.

Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet pulled one back for the Londoners but they could not manage an equaliser against a well-organised and vibrant home side.

Coventry boss Gordon Strachan put the victory down to hard work and team spirit.

"We didn't catch them cold," said Strachan. "We caught them because we had worked hard at the training ground every afternoon of the week."

"We've also got a great spirit here which you can't buy. People think it's a cheap commodity but it's not."

West Ham manager Harry Redknapp paid tribute to Ian Wright after the England and former Arsenal striker scored on his debut to clinch a 1-0 win for the London club at Sheffield Wednesday.

Redknapp, who snapped up Arsenal's record goal scorer in the close season said of the 34-year-old: "He's a fantastic goalscorer, what else can you say? He gets the chance and he sticks it away and that's why his record is what it is."

Christian Gross made no excuses after his Tottenham team were soundly beaten 3-1 at Wimbledon. "It was a poor performance."

We have some big improvements to make," said Gross, who was hoping the end of a two-year

Spurs injury-crisis would produce a new era of success.

The other four Premiership matches all finished as goalless draws: Blackburn vs. Derby, Everton vs. Aston Villa, Middlesbrough vs. Leeds and Newcastle vs. Charlton. Newcastle were booed off the pitch after failing to beat Premiership newcomers Charlton, who had Richard Rufus sent off for violent conduct after 25 minutes.

Manager Kenny Dalglish said: "We know how much the club means to the fans — it was a big occasion for everyone and we are all so disappointed."

There was also disappointment for Scotland's World Cup star John Collins who failed with a penalty after just eight minutes into his debut for Everton. Double winners Arsenal kick off their campaign against Premiership newcomers Nottingham Forest at Highbury on Monday while Liverpool face Southampton at the Dell.

Schumacher wins Hungarian Grand Prix

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Michael Schumacher reignited the Formula One world championship when he piloted his Ferrari to a crucial victory in Sunday's Hungarian Grand Prix.

The German scored his 32nd career win, and his fifth this season, finishing in front of Scotsman David Coulthard in a McLaren-Mercedes and Jacques Villeneuve of Canada in a Williams.

World championship leader Mika Hakkinen of Finland, coming off back-to-back victories, finished sixth after gear problems with his McLaren late in the race. He had started from pole position and led early.

Hakkinen, who had a 16-point advantage over Schumacher before the race, now leads the two-time world champion by just seven points with four

races remaining. Damon Hill of Britain was fourth in a Jordan with Heinz-Harald Frentzen of Germany fifth in a Williams.

Schumacher clocked 1hr 45min 55sec for 77 laps of the 3.968km Hungaroring, a total of 305.536km. He averaged 174.062kph.

While the 12th race of the season was a triumph for Schumacher and Ferrari's three-stop strategy it was a disaster for Hakkinen.

It was only the third time this season the Flying Finn has not finished on the podium.

"You can only dream about a result like this," said Schumacher. "I thought the best I could hope for was me first and Mika second."

"This is great for the championship — we have a real chance of that now. At one stage I didn't know I

was leading because I couldn't understand the gap between myself and Mika."

"This really is an especially satisfying victory after the last couple of races. Even after qualifying I thought we had a chance, but it didn't look good early on. But then Mika had his problem."

Coulthard said: "I don't know what was wrong with Mika's car. It was looking good for us early on and I could play around with the gap with Michael."

"But it all started to go wrong then. When Michael got out in front of me after my stop I knew we were in trouble."

Hakkinen powered ahead of Coulthard from the start as Irishman Eddie Irvine surged past Hill to move into fourth spot behind Schumacher.

The McLaren pair quickly surged away from their

rivals, opening a lead of almost two seconds after just three laps, and it increased when Hakkinen recorded a fastest lap on lap four.

Irvine stopped after 12 laps with a gearbox failure, allowing Hill to move back to fourth. It was only the second mechanical failure for Ferrari this year and only the second time Irvine had not finished this season.

Before the quarter-race mark, Hakkinen began to lap the backmarkers as he carved his way through the field.

Coulthard pitted but still came out second. Hakkinen led by 28secs when he pitted a couple of laps later and came out still ahead of the Scot.

Schumacher took a swift second pit-stop after 43 laps, followed on the next lap by Coulthard.

But the Scot's stop was nearly a second slower and McLaren paid the price when Coulthard exited the pit lane just behind Schumacher, who immediately recorded a fastest lap to heap the pressure on Hakkinen.

The Finn's second pit stop was also too slow, and incredibly Schumacher, who was going flat out, took the lead and surged away.

Schumacher did briefly lose control of his car, slewing into the dirt, but he maintained his lead, although Coulthard came past Hakkinen to move into second spot.

Schumacher set the fastest time on lap 60 and even though he pitted for a third time two laps later he still came out ahead of Coulthard.

Hakkinen, clearly nursing



Germany's Michael Schumacher competes in his Ferrari on his way to winning the Hungarian Formula One Grand Prix. Britain's David Coulthard came in second place followed by Canada's Jacques Villeneuve (Reuters photo)

his car after losing a gear, dropped further back off the pace and was passed by Villeneuve, then Hill and Frentzen and lapped by

Schumacher late in the race.

With the Belgian, Italian, Luxembourg and Japanese races remaining, the dri-

vers' championship remains very much alive. Ferrari are now 23 points behind McLaren in the constructors' championship.

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Sports

Arab Junior Swimming Championships Egypt dominates championship with 142 medals; Jordan third with 13

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 5th Arab Junior Swimming Championship concluded Sunday with Egypt leading the 12-nation event unrivalled with 1,320 points followed by Algeria in second place with 598 points and Jordan third with 422 points.

The Kingdom's Under-16 girls team Sunday added another bronze medal in the 4x200m freestyle relay bringing the total to 13 medals: three gold, two silver and eight bronze.

Egypt's exceptional efforts put them high on the standings with 60 gold, 51 silver and 31 bronze medals. Algeria was satisfied with 14 gold, 12 silver and 23 bronze medals.

Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Palestine were not lucky enough to capture any gold medals, while Iraq and Palestine finished the competition without any medals.

Egypt also reigned the water polo competition by taking the gold from the Saudi team who came second and Iraq was third.

Only three teams took part in the water polo competition: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, while the diving competition was cancelled.

Vice President of the Jordan Swimming Federation (JSF) Jaqueline Khouri expressed her delight at hosting this competition.

"I feel proud of Jordan as hosts and of being part of the organising committee," Khouri told the Jordan Times.

"I am also proud of our team, especially Hana Majaj who proved to be an exceptional swimmer," she added.

Majaj took home three gold medals for Jordan. She captured the medals

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Egypt	60	51	31
Algeria	14	12	23
Jordan	3	2	8
Syria	4	9	11
Tunisia	7	5	5
Morocco	5	9	7
Lebanon	1	3	6
Oman	-	3	5
Saudi Arabia	-	-	3

in the 100m butterfly in the Under-17 category and in the 200m butterfly and 50m butterfly.

The girls Under-14 team won a silver medal in the 4x100m freestyle relay and the Under-13 team also added a silver medal in the 4x50m relay.

Jordan won bronze medals by Sadeq Damrah in the 100m breaststroke; the boys Under-13 4x50m relay team; the boys Under-15 4x100m relay team; the boys Under-13 4x100m relay team and the girls Under-16 team in the 4x100m freestyle relay.

Jordan's coach *Ali Nawwas noted it was time to move on and take better care of the country's dedicated swimmers.

"It is time to seriously look to the future and especially the Pan-Arab Games," Nawwas told the Jordan Times.

Egypt's Ribah Hawari took the first place Sunday in Under-13 category, 50m breaststroke, while Jordan's Sandi Zuraq finished fifth.

In the Under-15 category, Morocco's Faten Lubaishi came first in the 50m breaststroke while Jordan's Dana Abioqah came last.

In the Under-17 category, Egypt's Shaza Abu Ismael came first in the 50m breaststroke while Jordan's Razan Khouri came fourth.

In the 1,500m freestyle

Egypt's Hani Tair came first while Jordan's hope Omar Dallal came fifth.

In the Under-15 category, Egypt's Mahmoud Badawi took the gold in the 200m backstroke while Jordan's Raed Nawras came fifth.

In the Under-13 category, Egypt's Samar Abu Zaid came first in the 100m backstroke while Jordan's Farah Younes came fourth.

In the Under-15 category, Tunisia's Salma Alyaji came first in the 100m backstroke leaving Jordan's Hiba Al Nasser in the seventh place.

In the Under-17 category, Egypt's Amineh Abdul Hafez came first in the 100m backstroke while Jordan's Besnet Zaitoun came sixth.

Egypt's Coach Majdi Mansour expressed his delight with his team's 142 medals saying Egypt had prepared well.

"We prepared ourselves for this competition and as you can see our efforts paid off with," Mansour told the Jordan Times.

"Jordan still needs to have more international exposure," he added.

Meanwhile, Egypt's 50m breaststroke champion Shaza Abu Ismael said that she is waiting for the next event here in Jordan.

"I hope we will meet in the next Pan-Arab Games," she added.

Jordan's butterfly champion Hana Majaj proved that she is the only special-

ist of the event in the Kingdom as she registered three new Arab best times to her name: The 50m butterfly with 1:18.71 and the 200m butterfly with 2:26.99.

The August 10-16 championships grouped swimmers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Algeria, Oman, Iraq, Syria, Qatar, Tunisia, Palestine, Morocco in addition to Jordan.

Trophies and certificates were handed to all delegations in a special ceremony held under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Rania at Al Hussein Sports City Sunday.

The championship is the first of many in preparation for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Amman 1999.

Wihdat look to increase lead as 7th week kicks off today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Premier League's ten teams kick off the seventh week Monday before the championship halts again to regroup and prepare the national team for the Sept. 22-30 Arab Cup finals in Qatar.

During the past week, Al Wihdat took the lead from joint leaders Al Faisali whom they beat 3-0 only three days after Al Faisali beat Al Wihdat 2-1 to win the Jordan Cup final.

Titleholders Al Wihdat beat Al Ramtha 1-0 in their last match to keep their lead in the standings with 18 points. They will this week meet Al Hussein who are up to third following two 1-0 wins over Al Ahli and Al Qadissieh.

Al Faisali have an easy match against winless Kufirsoum who were held to draws in their last two matches.

Al Ramtha meet Shabab Al Hussein who despite their 4-0 loss to Al Faisali Saturday stand at a halfway point through the standings in only their second year in the Premier League.

Al Arabi are up to eighth place after a 2-1 win over Al Ahli and will next face Al Jazireh as both teams battle to advance their standing and avoid the relegation-threatened last two.

The surprise bottom-placed teams of Al Ahli and Qadissieh will be looking to

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Wihdat	6	6	-	-	17	2	18
Faisali	6	5	-	1	14	4	15
Hussein	6	3	-	3	4	6	9
Ramtha	6	2	-	4	8	9	8
Arabi	6	1	3	2	5	8	6
Jazireh	6	1	3	2	2	5	6
S. Al Hussein	6	1	3	2	6	11	6
Kufirsoum	6	-	5	1	4	7	5
Ahli	6	-	3	3	3	6	3
Qadissieh	6	-	3	3	5	10	3

Match schedule	
Ahli-Qadissieh	Mon. 17/8
Arabi-Jazireh	Mon. 17/8
Ramtha-Sh. Hussein	Tue. 18/8
Faisali-Kufirsoum	Tue. 18/8
Wihdat-Hussein	Wed. 19/8

score a win and improve their lowly image. Al Ahli, one of the founding clubs of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), are still winless and find themselves 9th after a series of dismal results losing to Al Arabi and Al Hussein in their last two matches.

With the end of the week's five matches Wednesday the Premier League's first leg would have completed seven of nine weeks.

Al Wihdat are this year looking for their 5th consecutive Premier League title and are the only team with an unbeaten record.

They won the first of the season's titles when they clinched their fourth Cup Winners' Cup.

Al Faisali won the second of the season's four soccer championships when they won their record 10th Jordan Cup last week.

It was Al Faisali's first major title since 1995, as Al Wihdat have won the Cup and Cup Winners Cup in the last two years and the Premier League in the last four.

The fourth trophy of the year — the Jordan Football Association Shield — will be decided next month.

The Premier League Championship kicked off in April but has witnessed a series of delays starting with the month-long boycott of seven teams over the issue of ticket sales allocation before the JFA settled

the dispute.

The championship then resumed only to halt again in June during which the national team prepared for the Arab Cup qualifiers. It then resumed Aug. 9 and will now stop again until the national team ends participation in the 12-team Arab Cup finals in September.

Jordan qualified to the Arab Cup finals after beating Lebanon 2-0, drawing 1-1 with Palestine, and losing to Syria 3-0.

In the finals, Jordan will be playing alongside Libya and Qatar in Group 1. Group 2 includes titleholders Egypt, Kuwait and Syria. Morocco, the UAE and Sudan will be playing in Group 3 while Group 4 includes Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Lebanon.

The top team in each group will qualify to the second round where the winners advance to the finals and the losers play for third and fourth places.

Rafter stands between Sampras reclaiming top spot

MASON (AFP) — Pete Sampras moved one victory away from regaining the World No. 1 ranking, stopping big-serving Swede Magnus Larsson 7-5, 2-6, 6-1, here Saturday in the ATP Championship semi-finals.

Sampras struggled, losing his first set of the week, but bounced back with a break of World No. 37 Larsson in the second game of the third set to move into winning position at the \$2.45 million event.

Sampras still needs to defend his title in the final against U.S. Open champion Patrick Rafter of Australia if he is to take back the top ranking spot on Monday.

Sampras has beaten Rafter eight times and suffered his only loss against the Australian in 1993. Chile's Marcelo Rios

snatched the top ranking away last Monday, but promptly lost his first match this week to put his position in danger.

Larsson had beaten Sampras in their last three meetings, including the Davis Cup final last winter.

"He's got a devastating serve. It's like it's coming down from a crane," said Sampras. "He beat me three times last year and he steamrolled me in the second set."

"But I got that early break in the third and he seemed to give up a bit. I wanted to keep the ball low, he's a big guy and he doesn't move that well. There were a couple of points that have gone either way tonight — and I got them," Rafter showed the form he wants in his defence at the Open, starting in a fortnight in New York. The third-

ranked Aussie reached his second final in as many weeks by beating Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov 7-5, 6-0, for his ninth victory in a row.

"This is my best effort so far, nine straight winning matches," Rafter said.

Larsson and Sampras indulged in first-set battle of serve, with the American laying down 13 to seven for the Swede.

But Larsson's nerve slipped a touch while trailing 5-6. The World No. 37 double-faulted to give Sampras a set point; the big Swede calmly saved with an ace.

Rafter, trying to put aside worries that he might be overplaying with the defense of

the U.S. Open title coming up, said he was pleased with his performance — and the fact that he got the win in an energy-saving hour.

"Just the whole game's come together," said the 25-year-old from Queensland. "I'm serving well, volleying pretty well, hitting my groundstrokes OK."

Rafter said though that no matter how well he is currently playing, it will be hard to ever duplicate the form he showed in winning the Open last September. "It can't get any better than that," he said.

Rafter's run of form over the last fortnight on North American hardcourt has turned the tables on some

career-long rivals. The Aussie has beaten Jonas Bjorkman, Tim Henman, Richard Krajicek, Petr Korda and Kafelnikov — all of whom he had lost to numerous times.

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

De Swardt reaches Boston final

BOSTON (AFP) — South Africa's Mariaena de Swardt topped her second seeded rival in as many days, beating American Lisa Raymond 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 here Saturday to reach the WTA Boston Cup final. De Swardt, who ousted second seed Anke Huber in the quarter-finals, will face seventh-seeded Austrian Barbara Schett in her first WTA final. The winner takes home \$27,000. Schett, a finalist last month in Italy, ousted Zimbabwe's Cara Black 6-2, 2-6, 6-2, in the other semi-final at the \$164,000 event. De Swardt, 27, won her ninth career singles title on the development circuit two weeks ago in Utah. She has been bothered by right rotator cuff tendinitis the last two years.

Dog stops NBA's Webber

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AFP) — National Basketball Association forward Chris Webber was detained and fined \$500 here Friday night by customs officials for possession of 11 grams of marijuana. Webber was traveling with about a dozen athletes to Barbados on a promotional tour for a shoemaker and on a layover between flights here when a drug snuffing dog detected marijuana in his bag. It was the second marijuana-related incident in seven months for Webber, who was arrested on marijuana possession and assault charges in Maryland in January while with the Washington Wizards. Webber was traded to Sacramento in May. Marijuana is not a banned substance under NBA rules and several players, notably Allen Iverson, have been involved in marijuana incidents in the past year.

Prost re-signs Panis and Trulli for 1999

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Former world champion Alain Prost announced Saturday he had re-signed current drivers Olivier Panis and Jarno Trulli for the Prost-Peugeot Grand Prix team for the 1999 season. Trulli will continue with the team in the year 2000, while Panis will be free to decide whether to stay on the basis of the results next year. Prost said, "Olivier had doubts over the performance of the team next year, so I said he could see then," Prost said. Panis said that after three years with the predecessor Ligier team and now nearly two years with Prost he wanted to gather the fruits of that work next year. Prost said he had wanted to ensure he kept Trulli, seen as one of the bright young talents, for two years rather than have to re-negotiate with him again next year.

U.S. teen phenoms rule pool


CLOVIS, California (AFP) — Teen phenoms Erik Vendt and Diana Munz proved themselves America's king and queen of endurance swimming here Saturday on the final night of the United States Swim Championships. Vendt, 17, won the 1,500-meter freestyle in 15 minutes and 10.50 seconds, slicing 20 seconds off his personal best to beat runner-up Chris Thompson by 3.92 seconds. "I thought I would swim fast," Vendt said. "I never thought I would do this well though." Munz, 16, took her second victory of the meet over Olympic champion Brooke Bennett, matching her 800 freestyle feat in the 1,500 with a time of 16:16.00, 4.61 seconds better than Bennett. Barbara Bedford stunned world 100 freestyle champion Jenny Thompson to win the 50 freestyle in 25.64 seconds, 3/100ths ahead of Thompson. World champion Bill Pilczuk won the men's 50 freestyle in 22.62 seconds. Cristina Teuscher and Tom Wilkens each won their second individual title of the meet by taking the 200 individual medley. Teuscher in 2:14.18 and Wilkens in 2:01.80 to beat veterans Ron Karnaugh and Tom Dolan.

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Advisers: Clinton will admit to 'inappropriate relationship'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton will acknowledge an "inappropriate relationship" with Monica Lewinsky when he answers to a grand jury on Monday, two advisers said late Saturday. For the first time, the president signalled he had a sexual relationship with her, these advisers said.

These advisers, speaking only on condition of anonymity, said Clinton had let his lawyers and aides know late Saturday that he had a sexual relationship with the former White House intern. "He may not have used the word 'sex' but he has finally broken through that barrier," said one of the advisers.

"He has crossed the rubicon," said the second. The second adviser, a long-time confidant, said the president had already disclosed the relationship to Mrs. Hillary Clinton, even as he steadfastly denied the relationship publicly.

The advisers cautioned the president could still change his strategy in the hours before his testimony.

The advisers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Clinton still intends to tell the grand jury only that he had an "inappropriate" or "improper" relationship, insisting that further details should remain private. But his lawyers expect that Clinton will be forced to tell the grand jury he had sex with Lewinsky, the sources said.

If Clinton makes a public statement, he would likely admit to an inappropriate relationship or encounter, but would go no further, said the sources.

Clinton's lawyers worried that any sort of concession to a relationship with the former White House intern would increase the president's legal jeopardy.

The unprecedented grand jury testimony Monday will be a dramatic culmination of 6 1/2 months of sensational and titillating revelations. Clinton's testimony could be a huge step toward political survival — or deeper peril.

One adviser involved in preparing the president for Monday said Clinton was having trouble focusing on the chore — easily distracted by world events, late-night card games and a hankering for golf.

After several hours with his lawyers Saturday, Clinton, in shorts and sneakers, stretched his legs with a jog on the South Lawn and tossed a ball for his dog, Buddy.

Two advisers who have



HAND-IN-HAND ON WAY TO CHURCH: President Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton arrive at Foundry United Methodist Church on Sunday in Washington. Clinton will become the first sitting president to testify before a grand jury on Monday, when he testifies via satellite about the Monica Lewinsky matter (AP photo)

'Clinton was easily distracted by world events, late-night card games and a hankering for golf'

talked to Clinton or Mrs. Clinton in recent days said the atmosphere is somewhat tense when the two are together, but the first lady has shown no obvious signs of anger. Indeed, she is a key player in the insular circle of top advisers.

Legal sources confirmed Friday that Clinton was discussing with his advisers a possible strategy for describing an intimate, perhaps sexual, relationship with Lewinsky. These sources argued his sworn denial of "sexual relations" with Lewinsky was technically truthful under a tortured interpretation of the definition provided to Clinton during a deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

Under their scenario, Clinton would refuse to provide details he considered to be private, but would signal to the grand jury and later the nation that the relationship went beyond mere friendship, the source said.

Early Saturday, it was learned the scenario had taken hold among the president's hard-line advisers.

Advisers say the language of a possible explanation of the relationship was being discussed. Indeed, there was concern

about using the phrase "improper" because Clinton specifically told reporters in January he did not have an improper relationship; some advisers have suggested the word "inappropriate."

Going down this road creates another problem for Clinton: Why didn't he acknowledge it sooner? That's why some advisers think Clinton must also express regret for prolonging the presidential crisis.

Even if he provides the public little or no new information about his relationship with Lewinsky, a legal source who consults with Clinton said the president may well be forced to tell the grand jury more. "It's one thing to wink and nod to the press. It's another thing under oath to refuse to answer questions and be evasive," the legal source said.

The president's official and private attorneys will accompany him Monday and could try to limit the scope of questioning because he will not be under subpoena.

Many of Clinton's political advisers assume that if he provides intimate details to the grand jury, the information will eventually leak to the public.

Their hope is that by the time the details emerge, the public will have already accepted Clinton's explanation and be eager to move on.

Recent polls give them reason to hope. A Newsweek survey conducted Aug. 13-14 showed that only 24 per cent of the respondents will think worse of Clinton if he admits to a sexual relationship.

Despite complaints from his lawyer that he has not prepared enough for Monday, Clinton has stayed up late playing cards and told aides he wanted to play golf this weekend. Some officials worried that a game of golf would look frivolous; others argued that the president needed time to unwind.

He also has been sidetracked by work. Clinton threw out a staff draft and rewrote Saturday's radio address on the African bombings. Also, a car bomb Saturday killed a score of people in Northern Ireland just 17 days before his trip there, and the U.S. embassy in Congo was shut down the same day because of unrest in the African nation.

Car explosion kills 28 in N. Ireland's deadliest attack

OMAGH (AP) — Police sifting the wreckage caused by a car bomb that killed 28 people and injured 220 in the worst single attack in Northern Ireland in 30 years said suspicion was falling on IRA dissidents determined to shatter a fledgling peace accord.

As Prime Minister Tony Blair interrupted his vacation in France to fly to Belfast, the Spanish government confirmed that two Spaniards were among the dead. They are believed to be the first foreign tourists to die in the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The blast in Omagh, a religiously mixed town 110 kilometres west of Belfast, came less than three months after voters in both parts of Ireland overwhelmingly approved plans for a new Northern Ireland government with power shared between its majority Protestants and minority Roman Catholics.

Police commander Ronnie Flanagan said Sunday a misleading telephone warning caused his officers to move people close to a car packed with an estimated 220 kilos of

explosives.

"It is fair to say that our focus at this point in time would be on those who call themselves the 32 County Sovereignty Movement," IRA dissidents opposed to the peace accord who also go by the name Real IRA. Flanagan told British Broadcasting Corp. television.

Before boarding a flight home, a tearful Blair told reporters the attack was "a blast of evil" perpetrated by "a tiny, fanatical group of people" without any support in Northern Ireland.

"We will not let these people wreck the future — the future belongs to the decent people of Northern Ireland, it does not belong to the criminals and psychopaths," he said.

IRA dissidents, who are committed to shattering the outlawed group's 13-month-old truce and the April peace accord it helped inspire, have planted several car bombs in other Northern Ireland towns in recent months, which caused many injuries but no deaths. In July British and Irish

police said they had foiled a bombing campaign in London.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern promised Saturday that the dissidents, believed to number no more than 100 and mostly based in the Irish Republic, will be "ruthlessly suppressed." The dead are 13 women, six men, and nine children, including a baby girl and several teen-agers.

Hospitals across the province said they were treating more than 100 people, at least 10 of them in critical condition. The Spanish foreign ministry said two Spaniards — a boy and a girl — were dead and another 12 were injured.

Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party, said he was "totally horrified" by the bombing. "I condemn it without any equivocation whatsoever," he said.

The phrase is significant because Adams has steadfastly refused to condemn violence by the IRA or its dissident factions in the past.

Envoy holds more talks with Iraqi officials

BAGHDAD (R) — The United Nations special envoy has held further talks with Iraqi officials to try to resolve a standoff between the Iraqi government and U.N. weapons inspectors, a U.N. spokesman said Sunday.

"Prakash Shah has held further meetings with the Iraqi authorities and the dialogue is continuing," the unnamed spokesman said.

Shah, special envoy of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, met Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Thursday and handed him a letter from Annan.

He said after the meeting

he had told Aziz that Iraq should resume its cooperation with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of scrapping Iraq's biological, ballistic missile and chemical weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) responsible for monitoring Iraq's alleged nuclear weapons programme.

Shah said he would stay in Iraq as long as he needed to continue dialogue with officials to resolve the standoff. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Friday that the United States would be ready to use force if necessary to counter any threats from Iraq.

Iraq criticised Albright, describing her statement as "hollow U.S. threats."

Baghdad announced on August 5 that it was suspending cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA unless UNSCOM was radically restructured and its headquarters moved from New York to Geneva to curb what it called U.S. influence.

UNSCOM halted arms inspections of new sites in Iraq last week, but U.N. experts will continue to monitor sites already identified by inspectors looking for evidence of prohibited weapons.

PNA launches manhunt for escaped Hamas leader

JERICHO (AP) — In a massive manhunt, Palestinian police set up roadblocks Sunday and conducted house-to-house searches for an escaped Hamas leader also wanted by Israel.

Imad Awadallah, a leader of the military wing of the Islamist group, escaped Saturday from a Palestinian National Authority (PNA)

prison in the West Bank town of Jericho, Palestinian security officials said. Roadblocks were set up in Jericho and in Ramallah, where Awadallah's family lives.

Israeli troops joined in the hunt for Awadallah, setting up roadblocks on Israeli-controlled roads leading out of Jericho and elsewhere in the West Bank, the army

said. Israeli intelligence officials briefed cabinet ministers on the escape and said there was suspicion that Awadallah was helped from inside to escape, said Aviv Bushinsky, spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu said was concerned and looking into the escape, Bushinsky said. Awadallah was arrested by the PNA last April and accused of killing Hamas bombmaker Mohdine Sharif, whose mangled body was found March 29 at the scene of a massive car bomb blast in Ramallah. The PNA said Sharif was killed as the result of an internal feud, a claim angrily denied by Hamas.

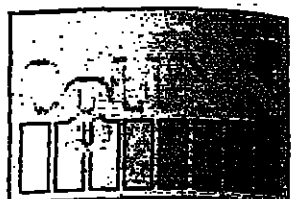
Palestinian security chief Jibril Rajoub said recently that Awadallah had confessed to Sharif's killing and would be tried. Hamas has accused Israel of killing Sharif with the help of the PNA.

Hamas leaders questioned Sunday whether Awadallah had really escaped.

"We don't have any information — the Palestinian National Authority did not inform us officially about him," said Ismail Abu Shanab, a top Hamas official in the Gaza Strip.

Abu Shanab said Awadallah had been tortured in prison. "We hold the Palestinian National Authority responsible for his safety inside and outside the prison," he said.

Awadallah's brother Adel has been on the run for several years and is wanted by Israeli officials for allegedly masterminding several Hamas bombing attacks in Jerusalem.



Charles 'wins hearts back'

LONDON (AFP) — Prince Charles, unpopular with the British public after the death a year ago of Diana, Princess of Wales, has won their hearts back according to an opinion poll published Saturday. The ICM poll in the Guardian newspaper showed 54 per cent saying the heir to the throne would make a good king, compared to just 40 per cent last October. Only 36 per cent of British people feel he would make a bad king, against 43 per cent in the last poll.

Hutchence's family outraged by reports

SYDNEY (AFP) — The family of rock star Michael Hutchence said Sunday they were outraged at reports that his former lover Paula Yates was having an affair with an ex-heroin addict. "We are greatly surprised at the headlines," his father Kelland Hutchence told reporters. British tabloid The Sun said Yates, 38, met 28-year-old Kingsley O'Keefe at the rehabilitation clinic where she was undergoing grief counselling after Hutchence was found dead, hanging from a door by a belt, in a Sydney hotel room last November.

Sophia Loren ordered a month's rest

ROME (AFP) — Italian movie star Sophia Loren has been ordered a month's complete rest after being admitted to hospital in New York with a heart condition, her husband producer Carlo Ponti said. The 63-year-old movie queen of five decades had suffered slight cardiovascular pain, Ponti told the newspaper Corriere della Sera. He said Loren would have to cancel a date at the Venice Film Festival on September 3 where she had been scheduled to receive a Golden Lion Award for lifetime achievement.

Arquette to star with real-life husband Cage

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Patricia Arquette will star alongside her real-life husband Nicolas Cage in Martin Scorsese's next film, the Hollywood trade magazine Daily Variety reported. The movie, titled "Bringing Out the Dead," is scheduled to begin production in New York. The movie will be the first time Cage shares a starring role with his wife. Cage will play the role of a paramedic who is haunted by the memory of the people he fails to save during his emergency calls.

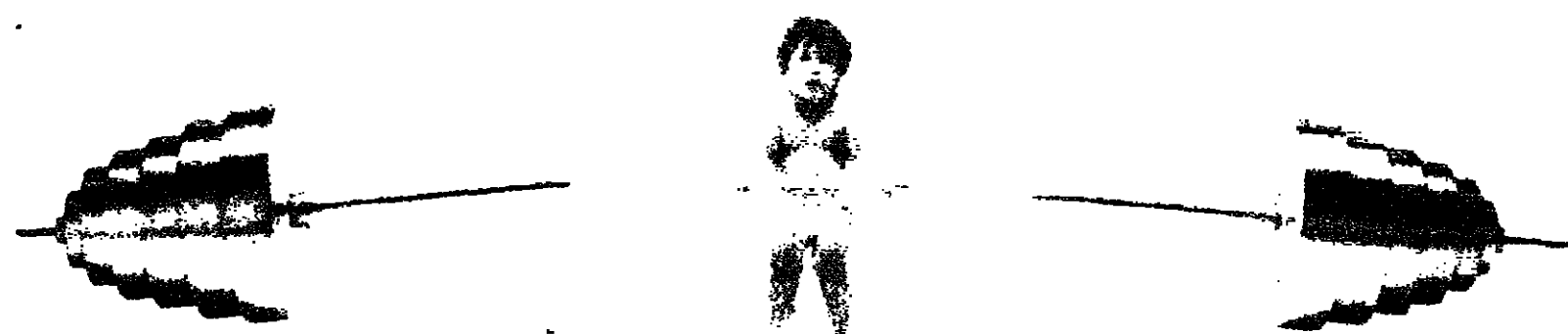
'We call it silent addiction'

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — The rapid growth of legalised gambling in the United States and Canada has drawn more and more teenagers into games of chance, with many finding it more addictive than smoking, alcohol or drugs, researchers reported. "We call it the silent addiction. You can't smell it on their breath, you can't see it in their eyes," said Jeffrey Derewinsky of the University of Missouri. "Gambling is going to become a huge social policy issue."

Iglesias, Muniz to be honoured

SANTO DOMINGO (AP) — Spanish singer Julio Iglesias and Mexican actor Antonio Muniz are the first non-Dominicans to be honoured in Santo Domingo's Boulevard of Stars. Their names will be inscribed on a downtown street Sunday.

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